Information for Social Change

Information for Social Change Number 26

Winter 2007/2008

**Special Issue on
Libraries and Social Exclusion**

**Special Issue Editors:
John Vincent and John Pateman**

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Editorial

Welcome to the Winter 2007 edition of Information For Social Change. The theme of this issue is Social Exclusion and the editors are John Vincent and John Pateman.

As Head of Libraries in Lambeth, John Vincent was an early pioneer of Community Librarianship and Outreach. John now leads the work of The Network which is committed to tackling social exclusion via libraries, museums, archives and cultural and heritage organisations.

John Pateman is Head of Libraries, Learning and Inclusion at Lincolnshire County Council. Lincolnshire libraries won the Libraries Change Lives Award for services to migrant workers in 2005.

Both editors have written and spoken extensively on issues relating to libraries and social exclusion. They co-authored two chapters for the *British Librarianship and Information Work* series (Ashgate 2006 and 2007): 'From Equal Opportunities to Tackling Social Exclusion' (1991-2000); and 'From Social Inclusion to Community Cohesion' (2001-05).

Both editors are recognised experts in the field of social exclusion in terms of theory, practice and staff development. In this issue of ISC they consider questions such as -

What is social exclusion and how is it different to social inclusion, community cohesion and social justice?

What is the relevance of social exclusion to library services?

Are socially inclusive library services necessary in order to meet the needs of the socially excluded?

The keynote article by John Vincent **'Social Exclusion — where is it going?'** gives a comprehensive overview of the current situation in public libraries in the UK with regard to tackling social exclusion. John asks, why isn't this way of working universal and what on earth can we do? He also gives some bigger picture ideas.

Developing a Needs Based Library Service by John Pateman is one of three articles in this issue which was written in 2005 for a planned ISC book. Although this book did not happen, the ideas contained in these articles are still relevant today. John defines a Needs Based Service in terms of 'From each according to their ability (staff), to each according to their needs (community).'

The second article written in 2005 is John Vincent's **'He didn't have to say he was gay': attitudes to lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered**

people. John looks at the damaging legacy of Clause 28 and what successful library provision for LGBT should look like.

John Pateman's article on **Public Libraries and the Digital Divide** is a very topical overview of digital exclusion as it affects both consumers and citizens. The People's Network was meant to help close this divide but charges for access, internet filtering and out of date equipment and software are preventing this from happening.

Both editors were involved in the seminal research project *Open to All? Public Libraries and Social Exclusion* (MLA, 2000). This research challenged the myth that public libraries were really open to all people. Andrew Hudson asks a similar question in his article **Are We All Being Served?** His findings are that public libraries are still significantly underused by some social and ethnic groups.

To continue the tradition of including international perspectives in each issue of ISC, there are articles on Cuba and Canada. **Reading Orwell in Havana** is the third article written in 2005, when John Pateman went to Cuba to carry out his research into the availability of the works of Orwell and other 'banned authors' in Cuban libraries.

The final article is **Library Services for Newcomers to Canada: Embracing Cultural Diversity** by Kendra Bender. The author is a student in the MLIS program at the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Alberta. This prize winning article concludes that 'the library community must continue to embrace cultural diversity and strive to equitably meet the needs of multi ethnic populations.'

And that is what this issue of ISC is all about – why and how public libraries should embrace cultural diversity and equitably meet the needs of their communities.

John Vincent

John Pateman

Social exclusion – where is it going?

John Vincent

Introduction

There has been plenty of discussion elsewhere (including in this issue of *ISC*) about the definition of social exclusion and how it relates to social justice, community cohesion, community engagement, and other Government policies. Elsewhere in this issue of *ISC*, John Pateman also draws on a range of background information to develop his argument for a needs-based library service.

Therefore, I thought that it would be timely to look briefly at what's going on in public libraries in the UK and to begin to examine what some of the critical issues are.

Tackling social exclusion in public libraries in the UK

I think that it is important to start by saying that there is a good deal of excellent work going on to tackle social exclusion, some of it relatively short-lived, but some of it longer-lasting and becoming embedded in service planning and delivery. Just to give a tiny taste of this, some examples are:

- Lancashire, Knowsley and Cornwall's work with looked-after children[1]
- Suffolk Libraries' work with older people[2]
- Books on Prescription schemes[3]
- Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Nottinghamshire's work with migrant/guest workers[4]
- The HeadSpace projects[5]
- Progress made by the "Welcome To Your Library" partner authorities in developing services for (and with) refugees and asylum-seekers[6].

However, at the same time, there are examples of library services that are not taking forward this agenda, not linking to social justice work, not seeing that this is vital work …

So why isn't this way of working universal?

Tackling social exclusion, working towards social justice and helping to create community cohesion should be amongst the top priorities for public library services.

Yet these aims are not included in CILIP's current Mission Statement [CILIP, 2004] or Policy Priorities[7], for example, and, whilst at the time of writing, MLA's revised Action Plan for Libraries has not yet been unveiled, one of the strong criticisms of *Blueprint* [Dolan, 2007] was that it was very thin on social justice.

Is it any surprise, therefore, that library services or individual library workers may not see these as priorities?

Working in libraries is a job that should be all about connecting and linking, networking, communicating, solving problems, information-handling – as well as masses more! Yet, for all that, many library staff seem very poor at making those links and building networks, and particularly poor at communicating.

So, one of the key problems we face is the lack of sharing of good practice – even at a basic level. People receive information (eg via newsletters, briefings, attending courses and conferences), yet much of this information seems to 'stick' with that person, rather than being shared as widely – and appropriately – as possible. This leads to a blinkered approach, and, often, a lack of realisation that another library service has started to 'crack' a particular issue or has made real headway in developing services for a specific group or community.

It is also clear that many of us are being overwhelmed by information – email is the blessing and the curse of our age! – and do not have the time to deal with this flow, nor, possibly, all the skills required to scan and decide immediately what needs action, reading later or deleting (you hear of people who file everything but read nothing!).

For years, 'library commentators' have been saying that library workers need to become more politically aware, particularly in relation to local and community politics, and the emphasis on this aspect of our work is growing through the community engagement and cohesion agenda[8] – how far are all our staff equipped to deal with the complex and controversial issues that will arise in developing community-based services?

More fundamentally, perhaps, is the question of time and resources. Libraries are under immense pressure to deliver high quality services, but often on reducing budgets. Even libraries that have made real inroads into tackling social exclusion, bringing in new users, developing new services may be facing cuts.

In many services, staffing levels are reducing, and the quality of work output and the outcomes of that are inevitably going to suffer – what happens to a service when it moves from having a children's specialist in every library, to having one per district, to having a specialist for the whole authority? How can that service pick up on and embed all the Every Child Matters[9], *Fulfilling Their Potential* [TRA, 2004][10], *Care Matters* [DfES, 2006][11], Children's Plan [DCSF, 2007], "think family" [SETF, 2008] priorities and imperatives?

At the same time, some library staff are maintaining outdated systems and working practices[12], and are not making full and proper use of technology available: does you library allow you to access blogs? Search for information involving words that have the letters "sex" inside? Quickly download and save large pdf files?

What on earth can <u>we</u> do?

- Find out what is meant by social exclusion, community engagement, community cohesion, and look at the work that is going on already in

libraries – use, as starting points, the resources provided by MLA[13], The Reading Agency[14], Welcome To Your Library[15] and The Network[16]
- Find out about, read and share existing good practice – for example, resources provided by the National Literacy Trust[17], Their Reading Futures[18], Welcome To Your Library [Vincent and Carpenter, 2007]
- Think about ways of sharing information with your colleagues
- Find out about your community. Some tips are available on the Welcome To Your Library website[19] (with planning advice and examples of project plans). Undertake a community profile[20].
- Build as many partnerships with people in your local community as you can – not only will you be able to share good practice, consult more widely about what the library could offer, and pool expertise, but your new partners may also have access to new resources!
- Keep positive! I know this is hard, but, as CILIP's Guy Daines is quoted as saying "'Although action is needed over borrowing, there are many things that libraries are getting right'." [Savage, 2008]

And here are some 'bigger picture' ideas …

This is part of my national 'wish-list'!

- We need high-level advocacy for the role that libraries play in tackling social exclusion (and the other Government agenda areas) – how often do we see documents appearing which are about our core roles (eg information), but with never a mention of libraries? Government agencies seem to opt to ignore libraries (what, for example, has the Social Exclusion Task Force developed in relation to libraries' work?)
- As part of this advocacy, we also need a national discussion – hopefully leading to a shared understanding – of just what the role of libraries is, including the part they play in these key areas of social policy. What should our priorities be? Where does the needs-based approach fit in?
- As part of this, we need to see a re-shaping of the role that libraries play, so, for example, there is no room for inefficient, old-fashioned routines (and people who don't want to work with the community)
- We also need to build regional and national alliances, so that libraries form working partnerships with other agencies, to our mutual advantage
- We need champions to speak on our behalf in a range of forums
- We need a proper development fund that will free library staff from the current penny-pinching mentality (this isn't a criticism of the staff – who could make something with annual budget of £300 for marketing?!) and allow us to launch a proper, 21st century service
- Finally, and this is a very personal note, there seems to me to be a lack of leadership and drive from DCMS, MLA, CILIP – how can we push libraries up the agenda and into their rightful place?

This is just a start! I hope that readers of *ISC* will respond to this, and, together, we can begin to build change into the public library service in the UK.

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[1] See, for example: http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=13772.

[2] See, for example, activities at Rosehill Library, http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/LeisureAndCulture/Libraries/LocationsAndOpeningTimes/RosehillLibraryOlderPeopleEvents.htm.

[3] A search-engine will lead you to masses of links, eg http://www.careline.org.uk/section.asp?catid=21439&docid=3511.

[4] See, for example: http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/home/leisure/libraries/libraries-newlinc/migrantworkerlinks.htm.

[5] See: http://www.readingagency.org.uk/young/headspace/.

[6] See: www.welcometoyourlibrary.org.uk.

[7] See: http://www.cilip.org.uk/policyadvocacy/policypriorities. "Policy has been divided into six areas: The Information Society; Learning; Public Health; Culture; Community Development; Economic Development/Business Success. CILIP will be concentrating on the first three."

[8] See, for example, http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/doc.asp?doc=16452&CAT=2195 and http://www.ce.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/scrcs_006693.hcsp#TopOfPage.

[9] See: http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/.

[10] See: http://www.readingagency.org.uk/young/fulfilling-their-potential/fulfilling-their-potential/.

[11] See: http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/carematters/index.shtml.

[12] I visited a public library recently where the member of staff on the enquiry desk appeared to be engrossed in withdrawing stock – so engrossed, that she did not look up to deal with me!

[13] See, for example: "Community Engagement Resources", http://www.mla.gov.uk/website/programmes/framework/framework_programmes/Community_Engagement_resources/.

[14] See: http://www.readingagency.org.uk/.

[15] See: http://www.welcometoyourlibrary.org.uk/informationResources.asp?cat_id=4.

[16] See: www.seapn.org.uk.

[17] See: http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/campaign/indexlibs.html.

[18] See: http://www.theirreadingfutures.org.uk/index.html.

[19] See: http://www.welcometoyourlibrary.org.uk/editorial.asp?page_id=16.

[20] See, for example, Sheffield City Council's profiling: http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/your-city-council/equality-and-diversity/race/community-profiling, and MLA, 2005.

Developing a Needs Based Library Service

John Pateman

The language of needs has become a dominant concept in the contemporary discourse on public services. For example, *Framework for the Future* (DCMS, 2003), the government's ten year strategy for public libraries, has many references to meeting community needs:

"Some are vital agents of change in their communities, reaching out to the people who need them most whether they are long standing users or not. Others are much more passive - they lend books and they respond to the demands of their regular public… So I think we need to define libraries' modern mission. The future success of libraries depends on their renewing and communicating a sense of mission which is relevant to the needs of society today… What individual library authorities do must reflect the needs of their local communities".

"What they offer needs to be what people want, at a time and place that is useful to them, and in a way that makes them want to come back again and again. They are ideally placed to become again central points in local communities. But they can only take back this role if they consult local people and put them in the driving seat. Not just once, but as a continuous dialogue. The best libraries do this. They involve, engage and inspire their customers. We want the others to follow suit. There will be leadership training for all library services. There will also be additional work on helping libraries better understand the needs of local people, so that they can provide what is important to people locally."

"The proposals are presented as a framework to encourage imaginative innovation and greater operational effectiveness and efficiency, adapted to local need and circumstance. I firmly believe that if we focus on this vision we will deliver a public library service able to respond to the needs of society at the beginning of the 21st century".

A Needs Based Library Service is predicated on the assumption that everyone has needs and everyone has different needs. Therefore a Needs Based Library Service is a universal concept which can be applied to any library service in any circumstances at any time.

A Needs Based Library Service has the appropriate strategy, structure, systems and culture which enable it to identify, prioritise and meet community needs.

A Needs Based Library Service involves and engages the whole of the local community in the planning, design, delivery and evaluation of library services. This approach is evident in other sectors. For example, *Sexual exclusion – homophobia and health inequalities* (UK Gay Men's Health Network, 2004) recommends that "Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual people should be actively

encouraged to become involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of health and education services". And *Youth Matters* (The Stationery Office, 2005), the Green Paper on provision for teenagers, makes suggestions on "How to engage more young people in positive activities and empower them to shape the services they receive".

A Needs Based Library Service does not have customers, but stakeholders, who own a stake in the library service because they pay for it through their taxes, and they have a say in its control and management via their locally elected representative.

A Needs Based Library Service is both democratic and accountable. Stakeholders include staff, partners, suppliers, service users, lapsed users and non users.

A Needs Based Library Service is a new way of thinking and a new way of working. It is about hearts and minds, attitudes and behaviours, as well as policies and services. It is a framework and infrastructure which enables and facilitates organisational change. It is a whole service approach to meeting needs, a holistic transformation, a revolution.

A Needs Based Library Service can be summed up in the phrase "From each according to their ability (staff), to each according to their needs (community)." In other words, a Needs Based Library Service gets the most out of its staff (through workforce development); and takes positive action to meet the greatest needs (through community development) in the community.

Developing a Needs Based Library Service is not a new concept. It is part of a historical tradition and continuum which started in the mid nineteenth century. Public libraries were founded to educate the poor and disadvantaged. They were not established for the rich or the middle class. They were not intended to be neutral, universal or open to all. They were targeted, focused and pro poor. They were an early form of positive action (not discrimination). Developing a Needs Based Library Service is a return to this tradition and these values of self help and self improvement for those who need us the most but use us the least.

Developing a Needs Based Library Service is not a return to Victorian values in the sense that public libraries were established primarily as a means of social control – to control the leisure time and reading habits of the poor; to keep them away from pubs, gin houses and penny dreadfuls; to stop them reading and discussing "seditious literature". Social change and improvement was a secondary consideration. Developing a Needs Based Library Service is primarily about social change – enabling, facilitating and empowering individuals and communities; giving them the information they need and helping to level the economic, social and political playing fields of life.

Developing a Needs Based Library Service is about transformation rather than modernisation. It is a revolutionary process which requires a clear strategic vision. The first fundamental question which must be addressed is, what are libraries for?

There are two schools of thought that are currently dominating the media and professional debate about the future of public libraries in the UK. One school says that libraries should go back to basics and focus on core services (particularly book borrowing) and making library buildings fit for purpose. This is about the modernisation of the traditional library service. The other school of thought says that there should be less emphasis on books and buildings (as evidenced by the fall in issues and visits) and more focus on meeting community needs through community development. This is about the transformation of libraries into needs based services.

These two schools of thought were reflected in the Government's response to the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee Report on Public Libraries (2005). In his introduction to this response David Lammy, the Minister for Culture, talked about the need to refocus on core library services, books, buildings and opening hours:

"Books remain at the core of libraries' work, and we must ensure that libraries continue to provide a high quality stock, and that access to special collections and back catalogues is essential. Over the last ten years, book lending and the number of visits has been falling. Libraries need to occupy buildings which are well maintained, attractive and welcoming to local people, open at times that match local demand, for example in the evening or on Sunday"

David Lammy also referred to the community development role that public libraries can play, through outreach activities and positive engagement with disadvantaged communities:

"Libraries reach out to communities in many ways. The make up of communities is changing, and libraries must make sure they keep up with those changes, with new needs and expectations. Libraries play or have the potential to play an important role in local communities for everyone, but in particular for those who are most vulnerable in deprived areas and elsewhere. We must ensure that libraries can deliver what these people need and want. I would like to see library services engaging with communities much more."

The debate has become polarised between Reads and Needs. Local authorities are left to decide where they place their efforts, priorities and resources on this spectrum. Getting a balance between the two is essential, as Mark Hepworth, the Director of Local Futures, observed in his introduction to *The Libraries Impact Project* (Laser Foundation, 2005):

"In this day and age we should not look at libraries exclusively as free book shops, or book warehouses or as promoters of book reading. Books are not everything, and book borrowing indicators should not be used as the prime measure of how libraries contribute to local and national priorities. More complex measures and methodologies are needed to properly capture the social benefits of library services."

Users, Lapsed Users and Non Users

Research indicates that public libraries are only actively used by up to 30 per cent of the UK population. The much touted figure of 60 per cent is a myth. Up to two thirds of the population may own a library ticket, but only half that number use the library on a regular basis. Those who do actively use libraries are fairly homogenous in terms of race, class, age and gender. They tend to be white, middle-class, middle-aged and female. This has been described as the "dominant" reader – a person whom many library staff identify with in terms of language, culture, attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviour.

Active library users make regular and full use of library services. They comprise up to 30 per cent of our communities. They are the core of everything we do. They are the   focus of all or most of our efforts. We are always asking users what they like about the service (the Public Library User Survey, for example) and what else they would like. Their typical response is to ask for more of the same, which tends to reinforce the status quo. These are people who use public libraries the most but need them the least.

Passive library users make occasional and limited use of library services. They comprise up to 30 per cent of our communities. They include lapsed users and those who are "easy to reach". They might have a library ticket but do not use it very often. Or they may have used the service in the past but stopped doing so when it no longer met their needs or when they could get their needs met elsewhere – by buying books or accessing the internet at home, for example. This group can be easily reached with some minimum effort on our behalf (via some effective and targeted marketing, for example). These are people who make some use of the public library and who have some needs. There is another category of lapsed users – those who visited a library once, but were treated so badly by the staff that they never go back!

Non-users have never used libraries (for generations) and never will, unless we reach out to them, engage with them, identify their needs and involve them in the planning, design, delivery and monitoring of our services. They comprise up to 40 per cent of our communities. They include the "hard-to-reach" and the "unreachable." These are people that need libraries the most but use them the least. There are also those non users who, following on from the 1980s/1990s, believe that they can just buy everything they need, and therefore don't want free lending services.

We need to know more about our active, lapsed and non users. A simple count of visitors does not go far enough. We need to know who these visitors are, where they live, their ethnicity, class, occupation, gender, age, why they use the service, what they use it for, etc. Many library authorities do not capture all of this data. Staff are reluctant, and regard it as intrusive, to ask library users too many "personal" questions even though most people don't think twice about giving their most intimate details (including income) to supermarkets, insurance companies, etc.

We need to adopt and adapt this private sector, market research approach so that we know exactly who is (and who is not) using our services. We can then target our resources more accurately to meet the needs of those who already

use us (the minority) and start to make efforts to reach out to those who do not use us (the majority).

Public libraries were established 150 years ago to meet the needs of "the deserving poor". They have, to different degrees and at different times in history, met some of those needs. But what they have never succeeded in doing is to meet the needs of "the undeserving poor" – in modern language, the homeless, the unemployed, travellers, asylum-seekers, refugees, migrant workers and ethnic minorities.

When forced to consider the needs of those who do not make up the core 30 per cent of library users, public libraries focus their attention on the "easy-to-reach". So, for example, when *Framework for the Future* encouraged libraries to become more socially inclusive, some libraries started to tentatively reach out to lapsed users and those that could be easily persuaded to use them. Some of these people have been attracted back into libraries by the People's Network, for example.

But at that point many efforts stop. Most libraries do not engage with the 40 per cent of non-users who are labelled as "hard to reach". Some non users are being tempted into library buildings by the Peoples Network, but they are still not making full use of the range of services which they provide. The People's Network is not being managed to target and meet their needs. And there is an increasing and disturbing tendency to charge for People's Network access, to meet income targets rather than to meet needs. This is creating a two-tier People's Network for the haves and have nots – which is the exact opposite of what was intended by government and the New Opportunities Fund.

As *Framework for the Future* suggests, the first task is to transform library services so that they have the capacity to deliver lifelong learning, e-government and social inclusion. As part of this transformation, libraries must cease to put all their efforts into existing users and start to focus on the needs of lapsed and non-users. It is possible to develop new services for socially excluded people without at the same time alienating the core user group on whom the current performance depends. To do so it is necessary to include current users in the change process. They must understand that, within constrained resources, it is necessary to target and redirect budgets and services to meet the wide range of needs within our communities.

Core users are generally able to understand concepts such as equity and social justice. As well as these altruistic motives, there is also an element of self-interest – the included know that there will be a price for them to pay (both financially and in terms of crime, etc) if social exclusion is not tackled. An inclusive library service does not only benefit the previously excluded – it benefits the already included as well. A service that is more closely tailored to meet the needs of its communities is likely to provide better services, stock, premises, staff and opening hours to all of its users, old and new.

The four pillars of a needs based library service are strategy, structure, systems and culture. UK public libraries now have a clear strategic direction (set by *Framework for the Future*). The next step is to develop new staffing and service structures to deliver this strategy. Long hierarchies need to be replaced by

flatter matrix structures, and there should be a greater emphasis on outreach working and community development. All existing systems, procedures and processes should be reviewed to ensure that they are consistent with a needs based approach to service delivery. Finally, and most importantly, there needs to be a cultural revolution with regard to old habits, ways of working, attitudes, behaviours and values. I will give two examples of the kind of changes that are required to develop a needs based library service.

The first change is a shift from customer orientation to customer care. Customer orientation comprises a range of techniques for dealing with customers – this can include giving a welcoming smile, wearing a name badge or picking the phone up within three rings. Customer care is about going the extra mile (or kilometre) and having the skills to understand and assess the needs of library users. It is about recognising that customers are not all equal in their life experiences and chances; so we should not treat all of our customers equally, but in a way that meets their individual needs. This challenges some deeply held professional library paradigms around issues such as equality, fairness and neutrality.

The second example is a shift from libraries that are based in communities to community based libraries. Many libraries are based in the community, but not all libraries are community based. There should be a positive and dynamic relationship between the library and the people who live in the neighbourhood. In community based libraries there is a clear organic connection between the work of the library and the needs of the local community. Everyone in a community based library is needs focused and working to tackle social exclusion and disadvantage in the local area.

Strategy

The first stage in the transformation process must be the development of a robust strategy and a clear vision which all stakeholders can sign up to. This strategy will help to prevent the service from being blown off course and will provide a common platform and language for everyone involved to work from. This strategy should form part of the overall objectives of the service. Depending on a variety of factors, including local politics and circumstances, a Needs Based Library Service can be based on a social exclusion, social inclusion or social cohesion strategy. It is also possible to combine elements from each of these three approaches.

A social exclusion strategy puts the focus firmly on the socially excluded themselves, who they are, where they live and what their needs are. Social inclusion policies locate social exclusion in a wider context. The advocates of social inclusion point out that it is not only the socially excluded who suffer from the outcomes of exclusion; so does the rest of the community. This can take the form of a moral concern by the socially included for the plight of those who are socially excluded and a wish to ensure that something is done about it. It can also manifest itself as a fear, on the part of socially included people, that they might suffer the consequences of others exclusion: an example is the fear that crime will spill over from socially excluded areas.

Social inclusion policies are also concerned to reduce the economic impact of social exclusion on mainstream society. The advocates of social inclusion policies would point out that, were it not being used to deal with the consequences of exclusion, the public service budget – and therefore general taxation – could be reduced or the savings reinvested into improved services for all. In other words, the socially included stand to gain financially, or through improved services, if social exclusion can be tackled successfully. Social inclusion therefore puts as much emphasis on providing benefits to the included as it does on helping the excluded

The proponents of social cohesion reach conclusions that are similar to, but broader than, those of social inclusion. Social cohesion focuses on whole communities, on participation and governance, as well as on the needs of those who are excluded. It sees the development and maintenance of social capital as a fundamental building block, alongside employment, services and a sustainable living environment. By social capital is meant those networks of interactions that we have with one another, that bind us together and act as a primary means of exchanging the information, skills and help that anyone needs in their day to day life.

People who are socially excluded have their access to networks greatly reduced. This leads to social isolation, and a lack of the usual forms of social support that others can take for granted, for people who are already living in difficult circumstances. That is why a lack of social capital has been shown to have a direct effect in undermining the health of socially excluded people. Social capital is therefore not only a basic component of civil society but also a necessity in tackling social exclusion.

Social exclusion, inclusion and cohesion are not separate, but overlapping points of view that may best be viewed as an additive policy continuum. Each move across the continuum makes further links between the benefits gained by those who are excluded and the benefits gained by those who are not. At the exclusion end, the focus is on alleviating and eliminating the exclusion. Social inclusion adds to the exclusion focus and the need both to satisfy the moral concerns of the rest of the population that people should not be excluded, and to ensure that the included do not suffer the spill over effects that can come from some aspects of exclusion such as crime or the costs of tackling exclusion. Finally, social cohesion adds to the aims of tackling exclusion and promoting inclusion the wish to do so within the context of a civil society whose cohesion is based on mutual links between people, that is, social capital.

It is highly likely that, in any one local area, there will be at least some activity taking place at each point on the continuum. The strategic question is therefore not, on which part of the continuum should one's efforts be focussed, but what should be the balance of efforts and connections between the different elements. For example, should further effort be focused on social exclusion? In the end, it can be argued, it is the socially excluded who are suffering the most and so focussing solely on their needs might at least ensure that something gets done. On the other hand, if it was felt that there would be resistance to focusing resources on the socially excluded, then social inclusion might be a more viable focus. Such concerns could be dealt with by explaining the benefits to socially included people or appealing to their moral sensitivities. Social cohesion would

be a natural focus for people who are concerned to unify the work of tackling social exclusion into wider agendas such as democratic renewal and the development of sustainable communities and environments. In the end, deciding where to focus on the continuum will involve a balance between pay offs, feasibility, legitimacy and the possibility of making links with other policy agendas.

Structure

The next stage in the process of developing a needs based library service is to remodel the staffing and service structures to enable them to deliver the strategy. It is likely that significant changes to the existing structures will be required. For example, if a library is in the wrong place or too small to deliver the strategy, it might be necessary to redirect these resources into a different part of the service – one which can deliver the strategy. Similarly, if the staffing structure cannot deliver the strategy, it also needs to be changed. The staffing structure must be fit for the purpose. It must contain the right number of posts, with the right job titles, job descriptions, person specifications and competencies to deliver the strategy. Some jobs may need to be completely redesigned to reflect the new service direction and the skills required to deliver them.

Changing the structure will also help to change the organisational culture. All cultures are based on language and so, by changing the language we use, we also start to change the culture. For example, many traditional library structures are based on the old professionalisms of children's, lending and reference work. Staff within each of these areas were regarded as specialists and had little, if any, involvement in other service areas. Thinking of libraries in these ways is no longer relevant or helpful. It is more likely that the new strategy will be based on themes such as Inclusion, Learning and Regeneration. If so, then these terms should appear in the staffing structure and job titles.

But one set of specialisms should not be replaced with another. So, although a member of staff's lead responsibility might be Inclusion, they should also have secondary responsibilities for Learning and Regeneration. This will encourage multi-skilling and will produce a more flexible workforce. It will also increase the portfolio of transferable skills that each member of staff has and should improve their job satisfaction, employability and progression. If the service is targeting the socially excluded, all staff should have community development in their job descriptions. This will make it clear that community development is the job of all staff and not just those in "Special Services" or "Equal Access". The aim is to make community development a normal part of activities. There are a number of ways to achieve this.

A good starting point is job titles, job descriptions, person specifications and competencies. If community development is not built into the design of a post then the post holder can turn around and say that "community development is not my job". Community development should appear in everybody's job description from Library Assistant to Head of Libraries. It should be clear from a person's job title and job description exactly what it is that they do – and what can be expected from them. It's like a UK TV commercial for varnish – "It does exactly what it says on the tin". Job descriptions should not be long lists of duties – but a focussed description of the key responsibilities and tasks of the

post. And these should be public documents for users and non users to see. In that way library staff become accountable to the communities they serve, as well as to their employers.

John Vincent (SEMLAC, 2005) provides a very good overview of libraries and community cohesion. Since the 1970s (at least), there have been publications identifying the role that public libraries could play in tackling social exclusion – then often called "disadvantage" or "deprivation". A major response was via "community librarianship" which, whilst establishing new ways of working, was, as Dave Muddiman describes it, "an inconclusive and incomplete revolution". From the late 1990s onwards, there have been a number of key reports looking at the role of the public library in tackling social exclusion.

What might be called the 'modern generation' of reports started in 1998 with one by Patrick Roach and Marlene Morrison, which focused on the "social distance … between the public library and ethnic minority communities", the "lack of clear vision and leadership on ethnic diversity and racial equality matters", and the lack of account by public libraries for their "progress in respect of race equality whilst current performance systems are largely colour-blind." Amongst their recommendations were calls for: a clear strategic plan for public libraries; greater integration and partnership between the public library service and related service providers and a review of the ongoing training and professional development needs of public library staff in the light of changing demographic and social circumstances. Morrison and Roach also published a set of guidelines for good practice, which some library authorities used to reassess their service provision.

In 1999, a Government working group published *Libraries for all*, a consultation document which identified the role that public libraries could take in tackling social exclusion (with case studies). This also included a set of assessment criteria, six steps which can be used to assess where a library service has reached. These are: identify the people who are socially excluded and their distribution; engage with them and establish their needs; assess and review current practice; develop strategic objectives and prioritise resources; develop the services, and train the library staff to provide them; implement the services and publicise them; evaluate success, review and improve. The final results of the consultation were published in 2001 as *Libraries, Museums, Galleries and Archives for All* which emphasised the need for a joined up approach to tackling social exclusion.

In 2000 a landmark report was published, *Open to all? The Public Library and Social Exclusion.* The most significant part of this title was the question mark because this report challenged the widely held assumption that libraries really are open to all and should be everything for everybody rather than taking a more focused and targeted approach. This research project had three main elements: a set of Working Papers, a survey of all public library authorities in the UK (to which there was a 63% return rate); and 8 case studies.

The report concluded "that UK libraries have adopted only weak, voluntary and 'take it or leave it' approaches to social inclusion. The core rationale of the public library movement continues to be based on the idea of developing universal access to a service which essentially reflects mainstream middle class, white and

English values." Key consequences of this approach include: "a continuing underutilisation of public libraries by working class people and other excluded social groups; a lack of knowledge in the public library world about the needs and views of excluded 'non users' ; the development in many public libraries of organisational, cultural and environmental barriers which effectively exclude many disadvantaged people."

The survey of UK public libraries found that: only one-sixth of public library authorities approximated to a comprehensive model of good practice for social inclusion; most authorities (60%) had no comprehensive strategy and had uneven and intermittent activity; one quarter of authorities had little apparent strategy and service development; only about one third of authorities comprehensively targeted disadvantaged neighbourhoods and social groups; most authorities had no consistent resource focused on exclusion, and this was sometimes very marginal; many of the UK's most marginal and excluded people were not considered to be priorities in library strategy, service delivery and staffing. These included refugees, homeless people and Travellers.

These findings were supported by the eight case studies (carried out across the UK), which found that there were: "some successes in addressing social exclusion, most frequently linked to targeted initiatives employing community development, partnerships, and other proactive ways of working; problems in developing an overall, service wide, policy framework with exclusion issues 'mainstreamed' only exceptionally; a reluctance to adopt resourcing models that consistently prioritise excluded communities or social groups; limits on the ability of library staff to work with excluded people because of a lack of skills and training and sometimes negative attitudes; a tendency to suggest that any 'community' activity automatically addresses exclusion and a tendency to consult with communities and excluded groups only sporadically; a preoccupation with libraries as a 'passive' service which prioritises 'access' rather than with proactive and interventionist ways of working."

The report's final conclusion was that public libraries need to be transformed "to become much more proactive, interventionist and educative institutions, with a concern for social justice at their core." The specific strategies for such a transformation were identified as: "the mainstreaming of provision for socially excluded groups and communities and the establishment of standards of service and their monitoring; the adoption of resourcing strategies which prioritise the needs of excluded people and communities; a recasting of the role of library staff to encompass a more socially responsive and educative approach; staffing policies and practices which address exclusion, discrimination and prejudice; targeting of excluded social groups and communities; the development of community-based approaches to library provision, which incorporate consultation with and partnership with local communities; ICT and networking developments which actively focus on the needs of excluded people; a recasting of the image and identity of the public library to link it more closely with the cultures of excluded communities and social groups."

The report also concluded that there are a number of "prescriptions for action" for tackling social exclusion, which include empowering local communities; targeting resources and services; tackling consumerism and the managerial culture; a re-examination of equality of opportunity; and the need to establish

an information policy. A small number of library authorities, (e.g. Kensington & Chelsea; the South Eastern Education & Library Board in Northern Ireland; Lincolnshire) are using the findings of *Open to all?* to inform and assess their work in tackling social exclusion.

Systems

The third stage in developing a needs based library service is to assess all existing policies, procedures and processes to ensure that they are consistent with the strategy, service and staffing structures. Many traditional library systems have created barriers which deter non users from accessing services. Membership and joining requirements, for example, are often quite onerous and bureaucratic. New members are asked for proof of both address and identity. Tickets are only posted to known addresses. For those who are unable (Eg Travellers) or unwilling (Eg refugees) to give their personal details to the authorities (often for good reason) this can be a problem. It was widely reported at the time that the Poll Tax was introduced that library records would be forcibly accessed to provide evidence in court against defaulters. Old systems need to be replaced with new ways of working such as self issue and partnership working.

John Vincent (SEMLAC, 2005) gives evidence from a number of reports, surveys and research projects into the role or potential role that libraries can play in community cohesion initiatives. A survey carried out by Resource (the Council for Museums, Libraries and Archives) in 2001 showed that, whilst 83% of public libraries' equal opportunity policies mention disabled people, only 27% had, at that stage, a disability action plan, 45% provided disability training to all staff, and 53% consulted with user groups. A report by the Central London Learning & Skills Council, *Young People's Attitude to Learning* (2002), makes it clear that young people do not necessarily see libraries as a source of information about further courses of study and career options.

In 2002, Resource published a report on the role that libraries, archives and museums could play in neighbourhood renewal and social inclusion. Whilst the report found "clear evidence that the sector is actively involved with projects focusing on neighbourhood renewal and social inclusion" (and a number of other positive benefits created by the sector), it also showed that: there was a lack of knowledge on the part of organisations as to what the sector could offer; there was a lack of effective, comprehensive evaluation methods to measure the sector's impact on neighbourhood renewal and social inclusion; there was limited evidence of the sector's working in "inter-domain or pan-sectoral collaborative partnerships"

A survey of public libraries' provision for refugees and asylum-seekers by The Network in 2002 (Ryder and Vincent, 2002) found that some library authorities were providing excellent levels of service, whilst some were barely providing a service at all. For example, several library authorities knew they had refugees and asylum-seekers within their authority, but did not know what languages they spoke.

The IDeA report, *Cultural connections* (2004) includes examples of where libraries have contributed to the Shared Priorities between Local and National Government. These include: Barnet and Bournemouth's community learning centres; Blackburn with Darwen's Asian women's reading group; Stockton-on-Tees's ICT provision; Liverpool's "Surfzone" and "Kids.com" provision; Lancashire's SMILE centre; Leeds's job-seekers' support work.

The Youth Libraries Group publication, *Bright young things* (2004), gives examples of the range of work that public and school library services are undertaking to support learning by children and young people, including young people who may be socially excluded (e.g. in Homework Centres, "Big Book Share").

The DCMS report *Bringing communities together through sport and culture* (2004), highlights the role that public libraries can play in tackling social exclusion.

A report by the Local Government Association on *Extending the Role of libraries* (2004) provided an insight into partnership working, funding, targeting user groups, the role of library staff and national and local support networks

These reports indicate that there is some evidence to show that public libraries can provide a focus for civic engagement, but there are many issues arising from this, including: the clash between the "old" and the "new" in terms of the sometimes conflicting needs of existing and new service users; the homogeneity of users may deter others; and expectations of appropriate behaviour. As Anne Goulding has said "The very success of democratic public space lies in its embrace of conflict and plurality and libraries need to consider how to address any tensions inherent in their use and access whilst still ensuring that their capacity to help promote social capital is maintained."

From the work that has been developed particularly over the last five years or so, it is clear that the major strengths of public libraries in the UK in relation to working with socially excluded groups are:

- Services are targeted towards specific needy groups and individuals
- Services are provided in partnership with local communities
- Staff are given thorough and on-going support and training
- Services are sustainable
- Socially excluded groups have a separate service

Culture

The final stage in developing a needs based library service is to develop an organisational culture which can support the strategy, service and staffing structures, and systems. Culture change can make many years to achieve, depending on how long the current culture has been embedded. This could take 3-5 or even 10-15 years to change. But the process of cultural change can be accelerated through a combination of service action planning, performance management and workforce development.

This long term approach to culture change is linked to another important factor, sustainability. Work with ethnic minorities and other excluded groups needs to be bought in from the margins (funded by short-term grants and staffed by project workers) and put at the centre of what libraries do (mainstream funded and delivered by permanent staff). It is no good raising expectations in the community and starting the process of meeting those expectations, only to stop when the money runs out and committed staff move on. We need to be working in excluded communities for the duration and be setting targets for the next five, 10 or 15 years, in the same way that the government has set a 20-year target for eradicating child poverty.

Social exclusion objectives and targets should appear in the Library Service Action Plan and individual Library Development Plans. These should then be translated into team and staff objectives. Targets should be set and performance reviewed as part of the appraisal process.

Libraries need to measure the impacts and outcomes of their needs based approach and collect evidence which proves that they are improving the quality of life of the communities they serve. These success criteria and performance measures are best developed in consultation with those who the services are targeted at and who should be fully involved in the planning, design, delivery and monitoring of library services.

Targets could be set, for example, to increase active membership, particularly among target communities (young people, men, ethnic minorities). Targets for increased issues (to arrest the decline of the last ten years) and visits (in line with Public Library Service Standards) could also be set.

The Libraries Impact Project (Laser Foundation, 2005) recommended a range of impact measures, based on four of the shared priorities between central and local government:

- Education: the impact on adults (post 16 population) of library services supporting adult education; the impact of libraries on pupils attending summer reading schemes or homework clubs / study support based in libraries
- Children: the impact of library activities supporting children and families
- Health: the impact of widening access to health information
- Older people: the impact on older people of receiving library services in the home; the impact of libraries on older people accessing information on entitlements to benefits and services.

These performance indicators are designed to augment the *Public Library Impact Measures* which have been developed by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (2005). All UK public libraries are required to collect data on the following Impact Measures from April 2005:

- Raising standards across schools: number of Bookstart (a national early years free book scheme) packs delivered to children aged 0-9 months, 18-30 months, 36-48 months; number of new library members aged 0-4 years; number of young people who take part in the Summer Reading Challenge (national summer reading scheme)

- Improving quality of life for children, young people, families at risk and older people: number of people receiving a Home Library Service (a service to someone unable to visit the library due to infirmity, physical or mental disability)
- Promoting healthier communities and narrowing health inequalities: provision and take up of health related stock
- Creating safer and stronger communities: access to, and take up of, ICT based services including The People's Network (free internet access)
- Promoting the economic vitality of communities: access to ICT based learning sessions

Another requirement of the Public Library Impact Measures is that every library authority should develop community profiles: "A community profile is essential to identify the community need for library services and will inform planning, target setting and performance measurement. Guidelines are provided to suggest the minimum level of information authorities should include". This minimum information includes: population, age profile, live births, ethnic groups, religion, health and caring, economic status, households, tenure, car ownership, travel to work, and deprivation indicators.

In 2004 the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) commissioned the New Directions in Social Policy program. Within this program MLA has contracted consultants Burns Owens Partnership (BOP) to develop and pilot library outcome measures to document the impact of the sector in three main areas: healthy communities, social capital and community identity and cohesion. These outcome measures (known as Generic Social Outcomes or GSOs) will feed into the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) framework which is the main vehicle used by the government to measure the performance of local councils. The CPA framework is being made more rigorous via a new regime known as *Comprehensive Performance Assessment – the Harder Test* (Audit Commission, 2005). The key areas for assessment will be sustainable communities, safer and stronger communities, healthier communities, older people and children and young people. CPA assessments will look for evidence of user focus, diversity, value for money and community leadership.

Public Library Standards have been replaced by a new single performance indicator which forms part of the 198 measures used by central government to monitor the performance of local services. Comprehensive Performance Assessment is being replaced by Comprehensive Area Assessment, which will be linked to Local Area Agreements, Local Public Service Agreements and Community Strategies.

Research in the UK has indicated that the greatest weakness and the biggest challenge facing library services which want to tackle social exclusion is how to change the role of the librarian. Most public library staff in the UK are not able to design and deliver services for excluded groups. They require new skills and a different type of education and training. When a library service is transformed from a passive, traditional, provider-driven service to a proactive, needs-based, community-driven service, it is essential to provide a significant level of staff training, support and workforce development. Staff must be provided with the skills they need to work in new ways. McArthur and Nicholson (2005) note that, "In an ever changing environment, training and support is required for frontline

staff to help them deal effectively with situations that will arise. Library services are often failing their people by not providing adequate training to equip their teams with the knowledge and skills required for the future of the service."

Within the library service there is a huge need for the development of interpersonal skills and 'people skills'. There are a number of approaches to this: awareness training – what social exclusion is and how it can be tackled; cultural awareness training; training which helps staff to work with specific groups – courses on reaching out to looked after children and Travellers; operational training – how to draw up a community profile, how to identify community needs, how to manage successful partnerships, how to make funding bids, consultation, marketing; leadership and management training – which reflect social responsibility issues; joint working – this involves short term project working and longer term integrated service planning, delivery and monitoring with other services, agencies and organisations. In the process of working with other professionals, it is possible for library staff to learn new skills.

In each case, staff training and development must be linked to job descriptions, competencies, service objectives and appraisal. With these frameworks in place it is clear what is expected of existing staff with regard to skills and competencies. It is also clear what we are looking for when we recruit new staff. We are no longer just looking for staff with technical library skills. We are also looking for staff with skills which can enable them to identify and meet community needs via outreach work, partnership working and funding bids. There needs to be a total mind shift from being task focused to being community focused. By having a community focused mindset, staff will be more aware of what is going on around them, enabling them to be proactive in dealing with service users and anticipating their needs. A community focused mindset encourages a 'can do' attitude which means that everyone within the library service appreciates the need to take responsibility for service delivery and the way in which the community perceives the library.

Staff attitudes and perceptions also play a vital role in the effectiveness of public libraries contribution to social inclusion policy and objectives. Questions to be considered include whether or not the ethnicity and social and cultural background of staff can be a key driver in maintaining a positive attitude towards community librarianship. It is necessary to test the theory that an inclusive organisation facilitates an inclusive public service, and that the ability to empathise through personal experience motivates the pro active and successful community librarian.

This will require an assessment of the relationships between staffs own ethnicity, social, cultural and professional background and their capacity to make an effective, empathic contribution to social inclusion objectives. This assessment should be based on the following data: staff demographics in terms of ethnicity, age, gender, social background, educational attainment, professional status, length of time in service; awareness of national social inclusion policy; perceptions of the community role for the public library; perceptions of socially excluded groups in the locality; perceptions of the extent to which these groups are being included; brief coverage of the ways in which exclusion is being addressed; attitudes towards professional roles and responsibilities in addressing exclusion; the extent of staff participation (including willingness to become

involved) in social inclusion policy implementation; the effects of internal politics, including communication, training and professional inclusion upon attitudes towards social inclusion policy; the perceived impact of national government social inclusion policy and agenda on current practice; which excluded groups staff feel that the library service particularly targets and how; which groups staff feel that the library service excludes and how; future plans for social inclusion at a local level

Sarah McNichol (2004) identified some barriers to library use: the perception of library staff as "officious and not particularly helpful"; "the staff seem to be absorbed in their work and I felt I was intruding"; "I grew up thinking that libraries were for use by those who were better educated than me"; "Libraries and their employees have not changed much in the past three or four decades, they are now using computers but they never in my opinion come out into the world at large."

Michelle McArthur and Keith Nicholson (2005) made some similar observations. They noted, for example, "how front line team members became so focused on the task they were carrying out, e.g. shelving, that they became unaware of the customers and failed to observe what was happening around them. Having spent 20 plus years in the 'people business', it was particularly disturbing to feel like an intruder when entering many of the libraries we visited. Customers are often made to wait until the staff member has completed a task before they are acknowledged as being there and waiting for assistance." There are three major hurdles that need to be overcome

- fear of change – everyone deals with change in their own way, but for many the fear of the unknown, or lack of certainty in the future, impacts upon their ability to deliver great service as they become distracted by the emotional barriers of fear
- attitude – in order to meet needs it is vital that everyone within the organisation has a community focused 'can do' attitude. Sometimes it is the staff closest to the community who have the best attitude, and the problems tend to arise at the supervisory / middle management level. Staff will only maintain their community focus if they have the total support and commitment of their line managers
- policy and procedures – many library services tend to rely on historical policies and procedures to take the service forward. Library services often recruit staff who have an interest in the products, and are process / task orientated individuals, who are not always comfortable dealing with the public, especially in difficult situations. Recruitment policies must change so that staff are recruited from 'people business' backgrounds, and have the necessary community skills.

As Annette De Faveri (2005) has said:

"At the heart of every positive story about the library is a personal experience with a library staff member. Staff develop and sustain the relationships that embody and define library services. However well-conceived the service model, without the people to humanize it, a service model is simply a set of instructions. Breaking barriers to library use is about building relationships. Building relationships is about taking time, and it requires staff who are trained,

knowledgeable, and understanding of the community's needs and the library's role in meeting those needs. As we build relationships we build communities. When we build communities we sustain lifelong learning for all community members."

A National Consumer Council Survey (2005) asked the question "What marks out the best public services - what is that factor that differentiates them?" In many ways the answer to this question is the essence of a needs based library service: "People speak about empathy, compassion, warmth, the human touch, respect - taking the time to listen and respond to individual circumstances, and focusing help on people who need it most."

Emerging research (2007) shows that there is a significant empathy gap in public libraries between the homogenous nature of the staff and the increasingly diverse make up of communities. Most library staff are female, older, white and with good educational backgrounds (indicating a middle class bias). This compromises their ability to empathise with men and boys, younger people, ethnic minorities and working class people. All of these groups are under represented when their proportion of the general population is compared to their percentage of library users. The dominant staff member prefers to meet the needs of the dominant library user.

When tested, some staff can categorise 'worthy' and 'unworthy' library users, which is resonant of the Victorian attitude towards the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor. Within this typology the homebound and deserving but the homeless are not. The least deserving of all are those communities on the fringes of society – asylum seekers, refugees, migrant workers and Travellers. Research by Stonewall shows that these groups face high levels of public prejudice, driven by the media and the law.

The research also shows that many library staff are not aware of social exclusion policy in the context of public libraries; they blame this on management's failure to communicate with them. Another reason could be that they do not want to engage with this agenda and so they claim no knowledge of it. Some library workers – particular older staff – have expressed open hostility to social exclusion, which they describe as political correctness.

Staff training and development can go someway to enable staff to deal with social exclusion issues, but it cannot completely close the empathy gap. Similarly, working with other agencies, partners and volunteers can also help to raise awareness and understanding, but it cannot fully close the empathy gap. At the end of the day white, older, female, middle class staff cannot fully understand what it is like to be black, young, male or working class. Until we have a diverse workforce which reflects our diverse communities we will not be able to develop fully inclusive and needs based library services.

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'He didn't have to say he was gay': attitudes to lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered people

John Vincent

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Introduction

This chapter is going to look at some of the recent developments in libraries, particularly in the UK and in relation to the Government policy agenda around social inclusion/cohesion, but taking the provision of services for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered people [LGBTs] as a 'touchstone'[1].

As I started to think more about writing this chapter, I wondered whether, in 2005, discussing the provision of library services for LGBTs really could be described as 'radical' – after all, "Clause 28"[2] had been repealed in the UK, and libraries were now signing up to new ways of delivering library services, post *Framework for the future* [DCMS, 2003]. What was 'radical' in all that?

Then, three significant events occurred: firstly, in reporting back to me some comments about a course I had run, a colleague told me that all the feedback had been extremely positive, except for one person who had said that s/he had found my session very interesting, but s/he could not see why I had needed to tell them that I am gay. Secondly, I rang a friend who had recently retired from working in a public library service, and, presumably released from any sense of obligation to 'hold the line', she told me in no uncertain terms that all this equalities training was a waste of time, and got in the way of providing services. And, thirdly, a colleague who attended one of my sessions at the 2005 Umbrella conference[3] said that he had not fully realised the extent of opposition that there still is from some library workers to the whole idea of equalities – and particularly extending them to LGBTs – and providing services for everyone.

So, what is all this about? I want to explore some of these themes and look at responses from governmental and professional bodies.

The chapter starts with a brief overview of the Government and library 'scenes' in the UK; these are followed by an assessment of where – and whether – LGBT people fit into all of this; and the chapter ends with some suggestions of what successful provision might look like.

Social exclusion, social inclusion and community cohesion

Social exclusion and social inclusion

Social inclusion[4] as a concept has been recognised in Europe since at least the 1970s[5], but has been part of the policy agenda in the UK since only 1997.

The UK Government's earliest definition of social exclusion was quite broad and limited (and this is the definition that most organisations are still using):

> "a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown."
> [eg in Social Exclusion Unit, 2001]

The importance of this definition is the flagging-up of social exclusion as "a combination of linked problems".

Such definitions were used by the Policy Action Teams [PATs] set up by Government departments to develop their thinking and take forward these policy areas [see, for example, DCMS, 1997; DCMS, 2001].

In their consultation document, *Libraries for all* [1999], DCMS developed their work on social exclusion against a broad background definition:

> "Social exclusion takes many forms. It can be direct or indirect, and can embrace both groups and individuals. Exclusion also has a geographical dimension embracing rural, urban and suburban areas alike."

However, by 2001, the Government's definition had broadened considerably:

> "Social exclusion is something that *can* happen to anyone. But some people are significantly more at risk than others. Research has found that people with certain backgrounds and experiences are disproportionately likely to suffer social exclusion. The key risk-factors include: low income; family conflict; being in care; school problems; being an ex-prisoner; being from an ethnic minority; living in a deprived neighbourhood in urban and rural areas; mental health problems, age and disability."
> [emphasis theirs]
> [Social Exclusion Unit, 2001, p11]

The most recent definition from the Social Exclusion Unit (in *Breaking the cycle* [SEU, 2004a])[6] states:

> "While social exclusion is often associated with highly marginalised groups facing extreme forms of multiple disadvantage, our approach is broader. We also include an understanding of how wider social inequality and intergenerational disadvantage can impact on the causes of social exclusion and the risk of becoming excluded.

This is a deliberately pragmatic and flexible definition. One of the characteristics of social exclusion is that problems are linked and mutually reinforcing …" [p14]

Some people (see, for example, Local Government Association, 2001a) have tended to see social exclusion as being related almost entirely to poverty – certainly, there is an economic element to exclusion, but early work at the University of Bristol identified social exclusion as being "multidimensional" [Room *et al*, 1993], and more recent work by Janie Percy-Smith [2002] and a team at Leeds Metropolitan University has shown that there are at least seven "dimensions":

- Economic (eg long-term unemployment; workless households; income poverty)
- Social (eg homelessness; crime; disaffected youth)
- Political (eg disempowerment; lack of political rights; alienation from/lack of confidence in political processes)
- Neighbourhood (eg decaying housing stock; environmental degradation)
- Individual (eg mental and physical ill health; educational underachievement)
- Spatial (eg concentration/marginalisation of vulnerable groups)
- Group (concentration of above characteristics in particular groups, eg disabled, elderly, ethnic minorities)

In talking about social exclusion, we are focusing on the needs of groups and individuals who can be defined using the "dimensions" listed above and who do not have access to services and facilities, or to society's decision-making and/or power structures. Work by the Local Government Information Unit, based on the Scottish experience shows that:

"There are excluders as well as victims of social exclusion, and these excluders include mainstream public services, such as health, housing and education." [Fitzpatrick, 1999, quoted in Geddes, 2000, p7]

The Network uses the two main Government definitions (supplemented by a fuller list of people who are at risk of or likely to suffer social exclusion), plus Janie Percy-Smith's seven "dimensions", to describe social exclusion.

Social or community cohesion

During the spring and summer of 2001, there was a number of disturbances in towns and cities in England (including Bradford, Burnley, Oldham and Stoke-on-Trent).

The Government's response was to establish a Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion whose role it was to "examine and consider how national policies might be used to promote better community cohesion, based upon shared values and a celebration of diversity." [Denham, 2001]

At the same time, the Home Secretary also established a Review Team, led by Ted Cantle, "to seek the views of local residents and community leaders in the

affected towns and in other parts of England on the issues which need to be addressed to bring about social cohesion and also to identify good practice in the handling of these issues at local level." [Denham, 2001]

As a result of these reviews, the definition of community cohesion shifted, and the working definition now used is:

> "Community cohesion incorporates and goes beyond the concept of race equality and social inclusion.
>
> The broad working definition is that a **cohesive community** is one where:
>
> - there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities;
> - the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued;
> - those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities; and
> - strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods." [emphasis theirs]
>
> [Local Government Association, 2002]

More graphically, the Home Office [2004] described the situation as:

> "... it became glaringly apparent that the people living and working in some of our towns and cities were deeply polarised and many communities were in essence living 'parallel lives'." [p5]

For a piece of work to be considered as contributing to community cohesion, it needs to have:

- A focus on the 'bigger picture' (eg countering racism, healing inter-generational rifts)
- The intention to contribute to community cohesion
- A strategic approach with long-term goals
- A change of culture for the service concerned
- The development of strong and healthy partnerships
- Sustainability – longer-term work, not one-off projects (unless these in turn lead to the longer-term)[7].

Relating directly to the themes in this chapter are the findings of a piece of research by Stonewall [2003], published in 2004 [Valentine and McDonald, 2004]. Amongst a range of valuable findings are that groups that challenge majority views on a cultural level include lesbians and gay men, and Asian people.

The report also identifies five different kinds of prejudice – well worth thinking about in the context of reactions to LGBTs from libraries:

- Aggressive
- Banal (mundane examples that may be intentional or unintentional and which pass unnoticed)
- Benevolent (positive views which may still produce negative consequences)
- Cathartic ("a release of views recognised as being less positive about minority groups, and therefore unacceptable, that is justified and therefore rendered acceptable" [p16])
- Unintentional.

This, then, is the broad, national policy context within which libraries are working. In the next section, I want to look briefly at *Framework for the future* [DCMS, 2003] and other major 'drivers for change' in library services.

'Drivers' for change in libraries

In 2003, DCMS published the milestone report, *Framework for the future*. This report highlighted a number of major issues for public libraries, including "the tendency for libraries to focus on current users rather than non-users [p20], and the idea that "people who find reading difficult and groups in the community most at risk of social exclusion may find libraries distant or even intimidating places rather than seeing them as symbols of community" [p40].

Framework then identified the three main themes that should be at the core of the "library's modern mission":

- "The promotion of reading and informal learning,
- Access to digital skills and services, including e-government,
- Measures to tackle social exclusion, build community identity and develop citizenship." [p23]

Specifically, the report stated that:

> "All libraries need to work to establish programmes that will engage groups and individuals that are hard to reach by identifying them and establishing what are their particular needs and then by redesigning services where necessary so that there are no barriers to inclusion." [p41]

The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council have produced an Action Plan [MLA, 2004b] in response, which, at the time of writing, is coming towards the end of a three-year phase, and which has led to the a wide range of developments (including the development of good practice in working with young children and their families, teenagers, and adults with basic skills needs; a marketing campaign; workforce development; and a reassessment of the physical state of England's libraries)[8].

This work is being underpinned by the new Public Library Service Standards[9], launched in 2004, which assess the physical and delivery aspects of public library services; and by the development of a set of Public Library Service Impact Measures[10] which, so far, are at a very early stage, but which aim to produce robust measures of the effectiveness of public library provision[11].

The Impact Measures have been developed to fit into the "Shared Priorities" framework [ODPM, 2002]. This framework was agreed between the Government and the Local Government Association in 2002, and sets out the priorities required to make improvements to public services. The key priorities are:

- Raising standards across our schools
- Improving the quality of life of children, young people, families at risk and older people
- Promoting healthier communities by targeting key local services such as health and housing
- Creating safer and stronger communities
- Transforming our local environment
- Meeting transport needs more effectively
- Promoting the economic vitality of localities.

Therefore, as a matter of urgency, there is considerable emphasis on establishing ways in which libraries – particularly public libraries – contribute to all these policy agendas, and on accessing the evidence to support this. For example, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council [MLA] have produced *Inspiring learning for all* [MLA, 2004a] which uses Generic Learning Outcomes as a way of assessing the impact libraries (and archives and museums) have on both formal and informal learning; and MLA are in the process of developing parallel Generic Social Outcomes [see, for example, Burns Owen Partnership, 2005].

So, where do LGBTs fit into all this?

In the Government context

In terms of the national, Government context, the answer is 'hardly at all'! Very little work has been undertaken so far to look at the LGBT dimensions of social exclusion, and, in the series of reports produced by the Social Exclusion Unit as "Breaking the Cycle" [eg SEU, 2004a], there is almost no mention of LGBT issues at all. This is particularly significant in relation to the "drivers" of social exclusion [SEU, 2004b] which apparently ignores work undertaken to show the effects on young people of homophobic bullying, the links between being LGBT and some health risks, and so on.

There are two key exceptions to this. Firstly, the Employers Organisation and the Local Government Association (in conjunction with Stonewall[12], UNISON[13], and the Association of London Government[14]) has produced a guide [Employers Organisation, 2003] for local authorities on how to engage with lesbian, gay and bisexual communities[15], particularly in light of the adoption of the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003[16].

This excellent guide works through what local authorities need to do in relation to:

- Corporate planning
- Service delivery and customer care
- Community development and involvement
- Local authority employees

- Monitoring and evaluation

and we will look at this again in the final part of this chapter.

Second is the review carried out by the UK Gay Men's Health Network [Scott *et al*, 2004], which highlights "sexual exclusion" – the health inequalities experienced by lesbian, gay and bisexual people[17].

In terms of building community cohesion, particularly given some of the tensions between cultural/faith groups and LGBTs, there is also scant regard at national, policy level to this as an area for development. The Local Government Association's *Guide* [LGA, 2004] – which is regarded as the guide for local authorities – does not mention LGBT issues at all, even though it includes a range of case studies.

Thankfully, Alison Gilchrist, in her paper on community cohesion for the Community Development Foundation (Gilchrist, 2004), at least includes an example from her own experience at a local community association:

> "... the Friday evening slot had been simultaneously (and unknowingly) offered as a 'Caribbean' night and a lesbian social. Neither group wanted to give up this coveted and highly popular time, so our compromise was to turn it into a women-only social evening, organised by the lesbian network and the 'West Indian ladies' group together. It was an amazing success and quite a breakthrough considering prior levels of antipathy and suspicion." [pp24-25]

and a recently-published "toolkit" [Government Office for the South West, 2005] does at least include some useful information in its Glossary, as well as some suggestions of areas to examine (eg recruitment criteria; how to deal with unpaid leave and other benefits; confidentiality), even if it does not mention LGBT issues within the main body of the text!

What has led to the 'invisibility' of LGBT issues in policy/strategy? One key reason has to be "Clause 28" (see below). Another reason may well be the Government's determination not to upset "Middle England", so, although there have been some notable moves towards liberalisation over the last 5 years, these are rarely promoted.

There are also issues about numbers (and about monitoring). Many LGBT people will not wish to be identified, and, if the view is correct that, for many of us, our sexuality changes during our lifetime, then it is going to be almost impossible to determine exact numbers.

As Stonewall state:

> "The Government is using the figure of 5-7% of the population which Stonewall feels is a reasonable estimate. However, there is no hard data on the number of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals in the UK as no national census has ever asked people to define their sexuality.

Various sociological/commercial surveys have produced a wide range of estimates, but there is no definitive figure available."[18]

In addition, very few employers have included specific questions about sexual orientation in staff surveys, so, even at the most basic level, it is hard to know just how many LGBT people there are[19].

"Clause 28"

Although "Clause 28" has now been repealed throughout the UK[20], its effect has been incalculable. Although many people are unaware of the specific terms of the Clause, they are fully aware of its impact; despite the fact that "Clause 28" has been repealed, this is still not widely known. As part of training for library staff – and others – on providing services for LGBTs, I always ask whether people think that "Clause 28" has been repealed or is still in force, and, generally, the majority believes it is still in force – and is therefore still preventing us from providing services for LGBTs.

Where did "Clause 28" come from? Following a spate of anti-LGBT coverage in the media, and high-profile controversy around some children's books (especially *Jenny lives with Eric and Martin* [Bösche, 1983]) which were written about in the media in the context of libraries' 'banning' Enid Blyton and other 'classics', and education (particularly the London Borough of Haringey's work on positive images)[21], "Clause 28" was introduced into the Local Government Act [HMSO, 1988], as:

> "28 (1) The following section shall be inserted after section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986 (prohibition of political publicity) –
>
> 2A – (1) A local authority shall not –
>
> > (a)   intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality;
> > (b)   promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship."

The clear intention of the legislation was to prevent 'promotion' of and teaching about LGBT issues, based, presumably, on the ill-informed notion that people – especially young people – could be 'turned into' LGBTs.

However, as a piece of legislation, it was never actually used, but, of course, in many ways it did not need to be – the threat of it was enough.

As Gabrielle Bourn says in her study of museums' provision [Bourn, 1994]:

> "Despite the fact that no one has been prosecuted under this clause it is a convenient tool used by certain councillors, who are often already prejudiced against lesbians and gay men."

Unsure of their position, schools back-pedalled in their teaching about sexuality, and the position of LGBT staff and students became extremely difficult – even today, some schools are wary of raising LGBT issues in the classroom[22].

A number of public library services refused to stock the *Pink Paper* [see, for example, *Library Association Record* 1995a and *Library Association Record* 1995b] and other LGBT materials; some withdrew support for Lesbian & Gay Pride; many stopped displaying information and producing booklists and other promotional materials.

In her survey[23] of library directors in the UK and in Canada, Ann Curry [1997] concluded that:

> "Overall, the British appear to be reluctantly compromising services to gays/lesbians to avoid Section 28 prosecution ..."

but, quoting an UK director, was also clear that personal views might well have a strong effect too:

> "'Sex, politics and religion are things which one keeps to oneself. I have no objection to homosexuality, provided it is kept quiet and out of sight as that sort of thing should be. I object to it being paraded.'" [p224]

Whether the "Clause" was ever used or not is probably quite irrelevant: what matters is the effect it has had, especially in relation to self-censorship[24].

LGBTs and libraries?

Historical background

Before considering key current issues, I thought that it would be appropriate here to look briefly at some historical background, and particularly to investigate what developments have taken place.

In a pioneering article in published in 1987, Richard Ashby [Ashby, 1987] argued that public libraries were ignoring LGBT issues, and that, whilst there had been some developments in provision (especially in urban communities), there was a lack of recognition of the isolation of many LGBTs. Richard Ashby called for attention to the following:

- Staff training
- The development of materials selection policies, leading to effective selection practice
- Greater assistance to LGBT users to help them find their way around libraries
- The urgent need to talk to LGBTs and to LGBT community organisations.

A number of important articles in the 1990s [eg Hendry, 1997; Fairbrother, 1998; Warburton, 1998] and pieces of research [eg Brett, 1992; Abbott, 1998] have highlighted the need for better provision for LGBTs by libraries, and, as part of the research project, "Public Library Policy and Social Exclusion"[25], we produced an overview of the then national and international position, and a

summary of the UK library position (together with a list of recommended actions) [Vincent, 1999].

What was clear from all this work was that, whilst there were exciting developments taking place in some libraries, these were sporadic and piecemeal.

Although, in the 1970s and early 1980s, there had been significant developments in provision for LGBTs by a number of library authorities, by the mid-1990s much of this had disappeared, influenced by "Clause 28", but also by budget cuts, national political change, the waning of community librarianship [see Black and Muddiman, 1997], and the fear of being considered 'politically correct'[26].

It is worth remembering too that it was only in 1995 that a group of the then Library Association (now CILIP) organised the first course[27] on library services for LGBTs ("Less equal than others", Community Services Group, October 1995) and, even in 1995, some attendees were nervous of being there, in case their employers found out that they were LGBT[28].

LGBTs and library policy

Just as, at a national level in the UK, there is relatively little mention of LGBT issues in policy and strategy documents, so there also little mention in library policy documents.

Whilst looking at the need to tackle social exclusion, *Framework for the future* does not include any mention of LGBTs, nor are they specifically mentioned in the latest Action Plan from the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council [MLA, 2004b].

However, CILIP have produced a useful document in their "Equal Opportunities Briefings" series [CILIP, 2004] which outlines policy and practice which library staff can use as a starting point.

LGBTs and libraries today

So, what does provision for LGBTs in libraries look like in 2005? What do staff think? And how are LGBT staff themselves treated?

As I have noted elsewhere recently [Vincent, 2005b], there may be some sort of liberal consensus regarding LGBTs and the services we provide, but, dig a bit deeper, and there may be a very different range of views! On training courses run over the last five years or so, people have commented for example:

- "Lesbians and gay men don't need library services.
- Lesbians and gay men don't need anything specific — they are just like everyone else really.
- All the stock is porn!
- If it weren't for people like you raising these issues, it would all go away.
- And even: 'John was very nice, but he didn't need to tell us he was gay!'"

In addition, a very few staff have refused to handle or have sent back LGBT stock when it arrives in their libraries.

Is it any wonder that LGBT people do not want to use some public libraries? Or that LGBT staff do not want to come out?

At the same time, however, there are examples of outstanding work by libraries to reach their LGBT communities and to support their LGBT staff.

One public library service that shines out in terms of its commitment to and provision for LGBTs is Brighton & Hove. When he surveyed its use back in 1998, Mark Norman found that Brighton & Hove provided not only successful collections of materials, but also had a high level of user involvement in this provision [Norman, 1998]. These trends have continued, and a brief description of some of the highlights of their work can be found in the CILIP Diversity Group's newsletter [Harvey, 2005].

Some library services (eg Haringey[29]) have taken the opportunity of Gay & Lesbian History Month [see below] to launch new collections of LGBT materials; and some (eg Norfolk[30]) are developing consultations with LGBT people in the area – library users and non-users.

February 2005 was the first UK Gay & Lesbian History Month, and a much more hopeful sign was the number of public libraries that took part in this. These included[31]:

- Barnet – LGBT history displays at three libraries
- Belfast Central Library – exhibition, "Pride and Protest"
- Birmingham – displays of their LGBT stock
- Blackpool Central Library – display of artwork by young people
- Bristol central Library – produced an art exhibition, "Under the Rainbow", featuring the work of LGBT artists over the last 150 years
- Bromley – "Rainbow Reads" book promotion
- Enfield Central Library – display of their LGBT stock
- Haringey – launched a new book collection and booklist
- Harris Library, Lancashire – display of their LGBT stock
- Newham – display of their LGBT stock, an exhibition by local photographer, Phil Maxwell, and a celebration event
- Portsmouth Central Library – "Bi-Textual" book promotion (contemporary paperback fiction from and featuring the LGBT community)
- Southwark – hosted talks by writers Mark Simpson, Stella Duffy and Jake Arnott
- Wandsworth – produced a short booklist, and each library put on a display of their LGBT stock.

There is also an exciting new development, "The Big Gay Read"[32], which is a mix of recommendations for reading (mainly fiction), plus a survey to find Britain's favourite gay reads, and a timely promotion for LGBT materials.

Local authorities also reflect their stance on LGBT issues by the way they state – and implement – their equalities policy statements. Some positive examples include:

Devon County Council have a brief, glossy guide, *Justice through equality …*, [Devon County Council, nd b] which spells out the key messages:

- "Commitment to eliminate homophobic prejudice and discrimination.
- Not assuming everyone is heterosexual during interaction or planning services.
- Acknowledgement of same-sex partners.
- Facilitating a safe environment for LGBT employees."

and a specific LGBT policy [Devon County Council, nd a] which clearly sets out the authority's commitments.

St Helens Council has a clear statement [St Helens Council, nd] which includes:

"2. The Council will:

2.1 Encourage the organisations it funds to develop and implement lesbian, gay and bisexual equality policies.
2.2 Work towards enabling lesbian, gay and bisexual employees at all levels in the workforce to feel safe in being open about their sexual identity.
2.3 Take positive steps in conditions of service to take accounts of the rights of lesbian, gay and bisexual employees, including recognition of their needs as partners, having partners, and as parents and carers.
2.4 Make provisions for anti-homophobia awareness training in existing training courses. Where necessary, make additional provision for such training in order to address issues, including the impact of homophobia on the organisation, policy and activities of the Council, its employees and others acting on its behalf
2.5 Ensure that all information, publicity and advertising over which the council has control and/or influence is non-homophobic and uses positive images and language to counteract the effects of homophobia and promote equality for lesbians, gay men and bisexual men and women.
2.6 Work with partners in the Hate Crime Reduction Group to effectively record and respond to and reduce the number of homophobic incidents within the Borough.
2.7 In policy development, service planning and delivery, the Council will ensure that the people do not receive a different quality of service due to their sexuality or sexual orientation."

Sheffield City Council has a staff working group on LGBT issues[33], and, at the beginning of 2005, produced a report for the Council's Scrutiny Board [Sheffield City Council, 2005] which outlined work-to-date (and which also reports that Sheffield will be asking questions about sexual orientation in their staff survey).

So, what would successful provision for LGBT people look like?

To some extent, it could be simplistic to produce a 'picture' of what success might be like, but these pointers may be of help – some of the general, non-libraries suggestions are drawn from the Employers Organisation guide [2003] (and the guide also includes much more detail on local authority work in this area in general):

Getting started

- Find out about the national context – eg via Stonewall, Trade Unions, Government and other organisations
- Find out about local LGBT communities – eg are there local political, support or community groups? Think about other organisations – with many of which we will already have strong links – via which we can consult (eg Age Concern, Mind)
- Find out what kinds of services local LGBT people would like from libraries – users and non-users – and develop open and responsive consultative methods[34]
- Find out what other library services are providing
- Ensure that both mainstream and specific needs are met
- Build active partnerships and joint ownership of provision, involving LGBT representatives in service planning and evaluation
- Avoid establishing an hierarchy, whereby some equality issues are seen as more important than others

Staffing issues

- Provide training for all staff, and incorporate sexuality awareness into other training (eg induction, recruitment & selection, harassment, and customer care training)
- Create a supportive environment for staff – eg set up or support LGBT employees' groups, and/or work through Trade Unions
- Tackle workplace discrimination by colleagues, managers and service users by developing policies on homophobic harassment
- Consider targeted recruitment in LGBT press (eg *Pink Paper*[35]) – and ensure that the recruitment & selection process do not discriminate on grounds of sexuality
- Ensure that social events are LGBT-friendly (and, for example, that LGBT staff are not isolated in the staffroom[36])

Stock

- A wide range of fiction, nonfiction, reference and information material (including magazines and directories) which will be of direct appeal to LGBTs (and which, of course, will also appeal to everyone else!)
- LGBT people have the same interests and needs as everyone else, so access to the full range of library services is important.
- Stock arrangement is still a thorny topic! Some libraries have separate LGBT sections, others shelve LGBT titles in the main fiction and nonfiction sequences. Which any library does will depend, to some extent, on the results of consultation – although, of course, it is important to assess

views received to see if they are likely to be representative. The most satisfactory solution for many people seems to be to have the stock interfiled, but highlighted via booklists (which must be regularly updated, perhaps via the online catalogue or intranet) and special displays (eg to mark Pride and Lesbian & Gay History Month), as well as ensuring that there is a LGBT dimension to everything else – for example, within any Black History Month or disability displays.

- When writing tender documents for suppliers of library materials, there must be a specific set of targets for suppliers to reach in relation to LGBT titles
- If possible, ensure that a part of the stockfund is still set aside for purchasing from small, independent suppliers (such as Gay's The Word[37], Bookscan[38], Libertas lesbian online bookshop[39], and Silver Moon women's bookshop[40]).

Access to ICT

- Beware filters! Some organisations' filters do not allow access to anything with the word 'sex' in it, others block words such as 'lesbian', 'sexuality'

Monitoring and evaluation

As noted above, monitoring is going to be more complicated than for other equalities areas, if employers wish to respect confidentiality. However, we can at the very least look at the following:

- Establish benchmarks for service provision
- Assess service provision against benchmarks and identify improvements that need to be made
- Use the Equality Standard for Local Government[41] as a way of assessing the current position and determining progress to be made
- Integrate targets on sexual orientation into all equalities action plans and service policies and plans
- Work with local LGBT groups and individuals to assess and improve service delivery
- Talk to staff about the possibility of including questions about sexual orientation in surveys
- "Be transparent … [especially about] what processes you will adopt and what you will do with the information you gain" [p66].

John Vincent
2005

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Appendix 1: The Network – tackling social exclusion in libraries, museums, archives and galleries

The Network was formed in 1999, growing out of the research project, "Public Library Policy and Social Exclusion".

A key feature of this project was that we held regular seminars to discuss preliminary findings with practitioners, and, at one of these seminars in February 1999, the participants asked if a network of some sort could be formed, in order for them to share good practice and to prevent 'reinventing the wheel'.

The Network was formed in 1999, starting primarily with library authorities in London and the South East – however, by October 1999, we had over 20 organisational members.

Since then, we have broadened our remit to include museums, archives and other organisations (including the Heritage Lottery Fund, Manchester Metropolitan University, the House of Lords Record Office, the Petrie Museum, the British Museum, the British Library, and the National Library of Wales), and, today we have 120 members (plus some 15 individuals). Once one part of a local authority joins The Network, this confers membership on the whole authority, and some of our members have used this to take advantage of reduced training course rates.

Its activities include:

Running training courses and conferences

These are a mix of open courses (which anyone can attend) and in-house training courses which are developed to meet specific needs of local authorities. Topics covered include:

- An introduction to tackling social exclusion
- Working with socially excluded children
- Working with looked-after children and young people
- Providing services for lesbians and gay men
- Working with refugees and asylum-seekers.

Some courses have also been provided for staff outside the libraries/museums/archives fields: for example, the introductory course has been run for the whole senior management team of a borough council; and the services for lesbians and gay men course has been provided for a London Borough's Children's Play staff, and a county authority's HR and Equalities managers.

Specific projects

The Network is also involved in delivering specific projects, including developing a training kit for library staff working with looked-after young people (funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation); developing service provision for refugees and asylum-seekers (firstly, with Kent Arts & Libraries as part of a DCMS/Wolfson project; and now as a partner with the London Library Development Agency in a Paul Hamlyn Foundation project to develop a model for service delivery across the UK).

In addition to this, we produce a monthly newsletter, drawing together news, good practice, reviews of key documents, updates of work at national/ Government level, and manage a number of email discussion lists for members to share good practice and make enquiries of each other.

We also maintain a website which gives access to a wealth of information in these fields (www.seapn.org.uk).

[1] Looking at recent developments in the US, it is also clear why LGBT issues are still seen as radical. In its announcement of the 2005 Banned books Week, the American Library Association stated:

"Almost 25 years after its initiation, Banned Books Week (September 24– October 1) has special resonance as gay and lesbian-themed books come under attack.

Three of the 10 books on the "Ten Most Challenged Books of 2004," compiled by the American Library Association (ALA) Office for Intellectual Freedom, were cited for homosexual themes—which is the highest number in a decade. These titles include:

"The Perks of Being a Wallflower" by Stephen Chbosky [Simon & Schuster, 1999]
"King & King" by Linda de Haan and Stern Nijland [Tricycle Press, 2002]
"I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" by Maya Angelou [eg Virago, 1993]

In the wake of proposed legislation and resolutions in several states this year to restrict or prohibit access to materials related to sexual orientation, the ALA Council passed a resolution in June affirming the inclusion of materials that reflect the diversity of our society and encouraging libraries to acquire and make available materials representative of all people.

'The voices and stories of gays and lesbians cannot be silenced in our culture or on our bookshelves," said ALA President Michael Gorman. "Banning books is an extreme disservice to our readers. Not only does it hinder tolerance and acceptance, it also limits the information exchange Americans hold dear.'"

[taken from: www.ala.org/ala/pio/piopresskits/bannedbooksweek2005/bbooks2005.htm].

And, earlier in 2005, Tulsa (Oklahoma) libraries moved books written for children about gay families out of the children's library, after Oklahoma lawmakers passed a resolution telling publicly-funded libraries that such books should be placed in "Adults Only" sections ["Library moves kids books on gay families from children's section", www.365gay.com/newscon05/05/051305books.htm, accessed 11 October 2005].

[2] Further information about Clause 28 is included in the section on where LGBTs fit into all the policy development.

[3] A biennial conference organised by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals [CILIP], which brings together all the groups and branches of CILIP under one roof.

[4] This section has been adapted from guidance notes on the MLA Website [Vincent, 2003].

[5] There is a useful paper by Rob Atkinson [Atkinson, 2000], which looks at some of this background.

[6] *Breaking the cycle* is one of a series of reports from the SEU, published in 2004, and assessing progress-to-date in tackling social exclusion – they also indicate work that needs to be undertaken next to make services less hard-to-reach. For further information, see www.socialexclusion.gov.uk.

[7] In developing a paper for the South East Museums, Libraries and Archives Council [Vincent, 2005a], I discussed community cohesion with a number of people working in this area, and these points were drawn from their comments.

[8] Further information and updates are available at: www.mla.gov.uk.

[9] See: www.culture.gov.uk/global/publications/archive_2004/library_standards.htm.

[10] Further information available at: www.mla.gov.uk/action/framework/framework_04a.asp.

[11] To support these, every public library service in England also has to carry out a community profile, which will give a good opportunity for assessing the needs of LGBT people in the area.

[12] Stonewall is an organisation campaigning on behalf of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals – see: www.stonewall.org.uk/.

[13] The public service union – see: www.unison.org.uk/.

[14] See: www.alg.gov.uk/.

[15] This document updated and replaced earlier work by the Local Government Association [2001b].

[16] The European Union established a general framework for equality of treatment in employment and vocational training via Directive 2000/78/EC. This is being enacted in the UK via the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 which came into force on 2 December 2003. These Regulations – and other legislative developments – make it necessary for all local authorities to develop and implement policies concerning equality for lesbians, gay and bisexual employees. It also means that there is an obligation on the employer not to discriminate, and the Employers Organisation document [2003] suggests that, "[b]ecause of the interface between local authority staff and service users, it will also be necessary to consider the implications for lesbian, gay and bisexual people in the community." [p13]

[17] If anyone is unsure of the extent to which lesbians, gay men and bisexual people are discriminated against, this is required reading!

[18] Taken from: www.stonewall.org.uk/information_bank/faq/79.asp, accessed 11 October 2005.

[19] One library service received regular complaints from a disgruntled user about their provision of LGBT materials, because, he argued, they did not even know how many people they were providing for.

[20] "Clause 28" was repealed first in Scotland in 2002, and then in England and Wales in 2003.

[21] For further information about this, as well as a critique of attempts by local authorities to deal with LGBT issues, see Davina Cooper [1994].

[22] The DfES have published two valuable documents recently: a review of the effects of homophobia in schools, with "implications for action" [Warwick *et al*, 2004]; and a guide to assist schools in challenging homophobia [Jennett, 2004].

[23] The survey included the views of 30 UK and 30 Canadian library directors.

[24] In a workshop at the Arts Council Conference, "Reading for Life", April 1998, one of the key points to emerge was that "Clause 28" had become an alibi for self-censorship and inactivity [Arts Council, 1998].

[25] This was a research project funded by the then Library and Information Commission. The final report was published in 3 volumes by Resource [Muddiman *et al*, 2000a-c].

[26] For further discussion of the way in which the term 'political correctness' has been distorted and used to block liberal developments, see Vincent, 2000.

[27] Previously, the then Association of Assistant Librarians (now the Career Development Group), South-East Division had organised sexuality awareness training for their committee [Montgomery and Behr, 1988], and Alison Behr had also organised a course for the AAL, South-East Division in 1990 on "Section 28: 2 years on" [Behr, 1990].

[28] This contrasts with, for example, the US, where there has been a LGBT body within the American Library Association since the 1970s – now the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Round Table (www.ala.org/ala/glbtrt/welcomeglbtround.htm).).

[29] See: www.haringey.gov.uk/gaybookcollection.htm.

[30] See *The Network Newsletter …*, 2005.

[31] Information taken from The Network website at: www.seapn.org.uk/lgbt.html (accessed 17 August 2005).

[32] See: www.biggayread.com.

[33] For further information on the Council's work in this area, see: www.sheffield.gov.uk/your-city-council/equality-and-diversity/sexual-orientation-transgender.

[34] As the Employers Organisation guide says, "Recognise the challenges of 'representatives'. Ask the lesbian, gay and bisexual people that you are working with to clarify whether they are sharing personal opinions or whether they can consult with a wider constituency." [p10]

[35] www.pinkpaper.com/.

[36] It is normal for staff to discuss their out-of-work activities – but we need to ensure that LGBT staff are not made to feel that they cannot talk about what they have been doing at the weekend.

[37] http://freespace.virgin.net/gays.theword/.

[38] www.bookscan.ukgateway.net/.

[39] www.libertas.co.uk/.

[40] www.foyles.co.uk/foyles/sm/default.asp.

[41] For further information, see: www.lg-employers.gov.uk.

Public Libraries and the Digital Divide

John Pateman

The People's Network is one of the public sector's most successful infrastructure projects. While the government struggled to build the Millennium Dome on time and in budget, local authorities delivered the biggest modernisation program in the history of public libraries. The aim of this program was ambitious, noble and pragmatic – to provide free access to the internet at every public library. Why, then, do we still see newspaper headlines like these ?

'*Digital world creates a new underclass*' (1)

'*Disadvantaged miss out as digital divide deepens*' (2)

'*Just who is using the web?*' (3)

Elderly and poor people are being left behind by sweeping changes in modern life, according to *Consumer Futures* (4), a study by the National Consumer Council. These people are disadvantaged by the rise of internet shopping and banking and the lack of face to face contact with managers to resolve problems. The result is a growing divide between well educated customers, who are comfortable internet users, and poorer families who find it hard to work their way through glitches with bills and labyrinthine telephone complaints lines.

More than 13 million people in Britain live in households below the low income threshold. More than two million people have no bank account. Those who need internet the most often have least access to it. Just 28% of people over the age of 65 have home access, against a UK average of 57%. This is a barrier to old and poor people being able to access basic services. The increasing migration of services online, with the best deals available only to the digitally empowered, is reinforcing social exclusion.

A National Audit Office report (5) has estimated that 75% of people counted as socially excluded are also digitally excluded – this includes those who are out of work, in poor health, live in social housing, live alone, or have a low level of qualification. The focus of this report is the lack of access that disadvantaged people have to government services. It's these people that must be targeted by government so they get the same information and benefits available to 'online citizens.'

New research from UK online centres and FreshMinds, *Understanding digital inclusion* (6) identifies the digital divide not just as a wide problem but as a deep one, with those stuck on the wrong side more excluded and harder to reach than ever before. While 61% of the population are getting all the benefits of digital access, the remaining 39% are not – and market forces, demographic change and government policy are making no difference to this divide.

Futurelab (7) has proposed a new 'charter for change' to tackle the digital divide. This charter challenges the government to act now to ensure that everyone can make informed and empowered choices over ICT use and their access to technology. We need to move beyond the assumption that simply providing hardware and offering access to ICT will bridge the gap. This was one of the assumptions behind the People's Network when it was first introduced.

The People's Network

The People's Network has played a big part in reversing the decline in visits to public libraries and attracting new and different users. But the latest figures show a worrying blip in the steady increase in visits that has characterised the last five years. While total visits are still 4.4% up since 2002/03, the total fell by 1.4% between 2005-06 and 2006/07. Part of the reason for this might be a failure to maximise the benefits of the People's Network due to the introduction of charges, internet filtering and out of date equipment and software.

Charging is the biggest barrier to accessing the People's Network. These charges widen the digital divide and break the spirit of the government funding which made the Network possible. Charging also creates another income dependency similar to the millstone attached to audio visual services. When services become subject to market forces any decline in income can lead to library closures and staff redundancies. There are plenty of disaster stories around which tell us that charging for the People's Network is a bad idea.

- Authority A has charged to access the People's Network since it was introduced. When this charge was waived for the first 20 minutes in 2005/06 to encourage visits, income fell and charges were reintroduced the following year. However, this then led to a drop in usage of more than 50%.
- Authority B introduced charges in February 2007, usage dropped by 50% and visits went down by 25%.
- Authority C introduced charges three years ago, use fell by 40% over night and has never recovered. They are now considering abolishing charges but halving the number of People's Network terminals.
- Authority D introduced charges for all usage except for 30 minutes on information sites. Usage dropped by 50% and visitor numbers fell.
- Authority E has reduced their charges as they were losing trade to local internet cafes.

The general pattern is that authorities who have introduced charges have experienced significant drops in both usage and visitor numbers and have not always met their income targets. Staff time in administering the charges has also increased, creating a very false economy. I have disguised the names of these authorities but perhaps they should be published within a league table which shows who is charging, and how much, for this publicly funded service? And perhaps the worst offenders should be asked to pay back their National Lottery grant which was provided with the aim of narrowing the digital divide?

Charges are not the only barrier to accessing the People's Network. A mystery shopping exercise (8) in 14 libraries found that policies on internet access varied in public libraries across the country. Access to the internet was refused by 2

authorities because proof of ID was not given. Among the 12 sites providing access there was no consistency in internet filtering. Only two libraries blocked nothing. In the other 10 libraries, the most commonly blocked were chat sites (50%), an advice site for gay teenagers (33%) and a gambling site (33%). None of these sites were illegal, and their availability in other libraries raises questions about consistency of access to legitimate content across the country. To compound the problem, much of this filtering is covert and so the user does not even know that they are being denied access to legal sites.

Another barrier to access is the failure of some library authorities to refresh their computer hardware and ensure that the latest programmes are available to service users. Terminals go out of date very quickly, slow down and crash, making a simple internet search very frustrating. Some authorities will not allow users to download information onto memory sticks, or upload their work onto public terminals because of concerns about network security. The effect of all these barriers is to create a two tier internet service – the Oxford Internet Survey (9) has pointed out that 'the wealthy probably have super speedy home connections and access at work, while the poor make do with internet cafes and possibly school computers.' The People's Network does not even get mentioned.

The Oxford Survey indicates that 90% of university graduates use the net, against only 55% of people with a basic secondary school education. The internet is used by 91% of households with an income of over £50,000, against just 39% with an income of under £12,500. And disabled people are under represented on the net, with only 36% online against 77% of the able bodied. The digital divide is both a symptom and a cause of social exclusion. This divide will only be reduced or eliminated when the following conditions are created:

- all individuals are able to exercise an empowered and informed choice about their use or non use of ICT
- all individuals have ready access to the requisite social and technical support, skills and know how to support their use of ICT
- all individuals have ready access to ICT based content and services which are relevant and useful to their needs and interests
- all individuals have ready access to a full range of ICT hardware and software

For public libraries to play their part in achieving this we must abolish charges for internet access, we must remove filters and other forms of internet censorship, and we must keep our hardware and software fully up to date. If we fail to do this then the huge investment, time and effort put into the People's Network will have been wasted and public libraries will become part of the problem, rather than the solution, to the digital divide.

References

(1) Jo Revill, 'Digital world creates a new underclass', Observer, 6 January 2008

(2) 'Disadvantaged miss out as digital divide deepens', Local Government IT In Use, July / August 2007

(3) James Eagle, 'Just who is using the web?', Morning Star, 4 August 2007

(4) *Consumer Futures*, National Consumer Council, 2008

(5) www.nao.gov.uk

(6) UK online centres and FreshMinds, *Understanding digital inclusion*, www.ukonlinecentres.co.uk

(7) Futurelab, *Beyond the digital divide: rethinking digital inclusion for the 21st century*, www.futurelab.org.uk

(8) *Open Gateway or Guarded Fortress?*, University of Strathclyde, 2006

(9) Oxford Internet Survey, www.oii.ox.ac.uk, 2007

Are we all being served?

Andrew Hudson

In tackling social exclusion we need to consider whether there are groups that are under using the library. In the early nineties, Sumison and Creaser conducted some research into the relationship between deprivation and library usage in London and the Metropolitan Districts of England (1). This research was restricted to socio-economic indicators on the D of E Urban Index such as housing or car ownership and did not cover other non- economic social factors such as religion, ethnicity or age. There research demonstrated that there was an inverse statistical relationship between the levels of deprivation as measured by the Urban index and book issues in other words book issues tended to be lower in areas where deprivation was high. They also demonstrated a relationship between some individual factors that were used in the Urban Index and library issues. They used a technique known as regression analysis the details of which are shown by Davies and Kenrick in their article on Statistics for Librarians in the Assistant Librarian (2). I have applied regression analysis to the issues for 2003/4 and the deprivation index for 2004 (3), to see if a correlation of statistical relationship still existed and the result suggested that it did. There is one difference in that there no longer appears to be two distinctly identifiable populations for inner city areas and suburbs.

I also decided to check various social factors such as religion and ethnic background to see if there was any relationship with library usage, with the intention of finding out if library were serving the whole community. There is one difference in that there no longer appears to be two distinctly identical populations. I also decided to test all issues rather than just book issues to see whether there was a correlation for all issues? have attempted to see if there is any apparent correlation, using regression analysis, between some of these factors and library issues to gain an indication of whether libraries are serving the whole community.

The authorities have been restricted to the 32 London Boroughs as there are considerable variations in the social composition of the 32 boroughs making them a good laboratory to undertake research. In particular, London has a high proportion of residents belonging to ethnic minorities, which account for around a third of the resident population of Greater London as a whole. There are also considerable variations between boroughs from Havering with around 5% of the population belonging to ethnic minorities, to Newham with just over 60%. The City of London has been excluded, as its library users are largely non-residents. It should be noted that correlation does not necessarily mean causality; sometimes there may be an overall cause. The statistics used for these individual factors are taken from the 2001 Census and the 2000-2001 CIPFA Performance indicators as they are from the financial year for which the census took place (4).

According to Sumsion and Creaser where large sets of data are involved a coefficients of + OR − 0.40 considered indicative of a relationship between

variables regardless of statistical significance. (5) Regression analysis for total issues and deprivation only puts the coefficient at-0.35, which is short of the 0.4 mark. However the plot in Figure 2 looks on the charts in Figure 1 appears to be fairly similar to that for book issues -
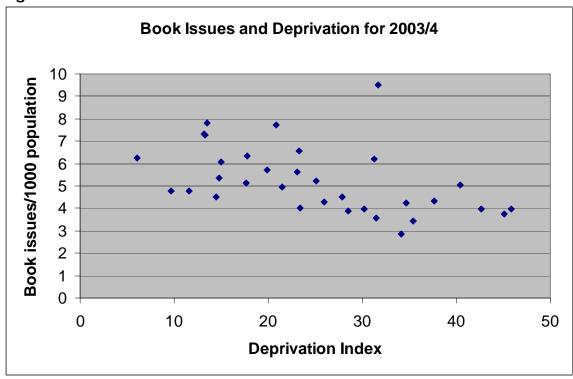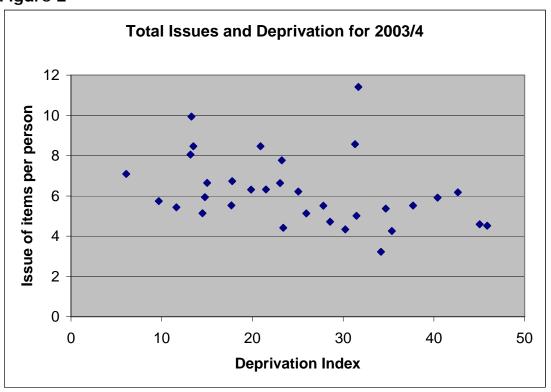
Figure 1

Figure 2

When individual factors are considered from social; groupings rather than deprivation some correlations are found as shown below

Figure 3 Relationship between library issues and Social Grouping in the London Boroughs in 2001 the significant statistics are highlighted

Social Grouping	Coefficient of Correlation
% White Residents	**0.42**
% Ethnic Minorities	**-0.41**
% Afro-Caribbean Residents	**-0.58**
% Asian Residents	-0.10
% Christians	0.37
% Moslems	**-0.57**
% Hindus	-0.09
% People with no religion	-0.35
% People over 60	**0.56**
% Under 16	0.08

It should be borne in minds that when two sets of statistics appear to show a relationship it does not necessarily mean that it is cause and effect and in many cases may be due to another underlying factor, which may be social class where deprivation is concerned which as John Pateman has pointed out on numerous occasions is still an issue.

The analysis suggests a direct relationship between over 60's and white residents and an inverse one with some ethnic minorities and Moslems. If added to the findings of Sumsion and Creaser it suggests that libraries are used disproportionately by a white middle class readership and are particularly popular with the over 60s. This is a hardly surprising conclusion and quantifies what many librarians could suggest from anecdotal evidence. However if individual ethnic minority groupings are examined, then there are differences. There may be an inverse relationship between ethnic minority populations in general and usage it is significant where the Afro-Caribbean community is concerned but not with the Asian community. Both these labels are almost certainly too broad as there may be differences in library usage within the Afro-Caribbean community between residents of direct African ancestry and residents of Caribbean ancestry and likewise in the Asian community between residents with ancestry from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and other countries

With religion, the correlation coefficient for Christian is not far off 0.40. There is an inverse correlation between Moslems and library usage but a non-significant one where Hindus are concerned. This could be indicative of a difference between people from India and Pakistan but it may be too great a generalisation as although Pakistan is 99% Moslem by no means all Moslems are from Pakistan. Census Statistics from Waltham Forest show the percentage of Moslems in the borough to be 15.1 whilst the percentage of residents of Pakistani origin is 7.9, which is only slightly greater than half. The world's second largest Moslem population is found in India where Moslems are a minority religion but the population of India is large. In Tower Hamlets there is a large Bengali population who are Moslems.

Language is not an area covered in censuses; the only statistics available are from DFEE statistics. However it should be born in mind that the statistics apply only to the school populations whereas the issue statistics apply to the whole population. Nevertheless there is a correlation of –0.47. These figures are for 1996/7 (6) and there may well have been changes since possibly with a higher number of pupils for whom English is an additional language. There is a need for first language to be included in the next census as there are communities hidden in the OPCS data such as the increasing number of Eastern European migrants in East London. Anecdotal evidence from working in front line services in East London suggests there is a demand for material treating English as an additional language in some boroughs. This demand varies in individual boroughs and will vary between boroughs. Anecdotal evidence suggests there is a group whose needs are not being met fully. It is a group that is likely to grow as globalisation results in increased economic migration and English albeit with American spelling is rapidly becoming the global language through satellite broadcasting and the Internet. Libraries have tended to lag behind education in a lot of performance and social exclusion issues and the provision of items that deal with English as an additional language is an example of this. There are however signs that this is starting to change. The recent parliamentary select committee suggested that one of the roles of a public library's operational sphere in tackling social exclusion could be assisting people for whom English is not a first language through mother tongue provision and by organising reading classes but it failed to recommend provision of materials to enable people to learn English. In London and the South East there are now a considerable number of economic migrants whose first language isn't English. Enabling them to learn English will assist them in their work and in exercising their employment rights. Regrettably government policy appears to be to compel people to learn English and charge them for the privilege. The recent TUC report **Forced Labour and migration** shows that large-scale exploitation of migrant workers is occurring. There are also communities that do not show in the OPCS data such as the recent arrivals from Eastern Europe whose presence is shown by other indicators such as dispenser stands for **Polish Express** as outside Leyton tube station and shops advertising that they sell Polish food.

Economic migration has been occurring on a large scale particularly in South East England and will continue with globalisation. There is a strong case for economic migrants being regarded as a group for whom the library service provides special services including not only items teaching English as a Second Language but also on employment and immigration law. It is important that the library and joining procedures are not perceived as being an extension of the immigration service as it could be a deterrent. Estimates of the number of illegal residents vary but the most sources agree that it is over a million. People in this position are vulnerable to exploitation, some are victims of people traffickers, some may have entered legally and had their papers confiscated by employers other are temporary visa overstayers. There are also people who may have legal residence status but are unsure or unaware of it. These are the people for whom information and advice is essential.

Regression analysis for London suggests that there are groups that the library is not serving as well as it could be. This should not however be interpreted that groups for whom library usage is high should be taken for granted such as the

over 60's. As the proportion of over 60's increases, so will their voting power particularly as they are more likely to vote than younger people. The increased proportion of over 60's should be reflected in library issues.

Moslems now form the largest non-Christian religious grouping in Britain and it is worrying if the library service is failing to meet their needs particularly as there are young Moslems who feel alienated by society. Likewise with the Afro-Caribbean community and library usage. There may be areas where targeting may benefit several groups such as improving the service to people for whom English is an additional language where the demand comes from several ethnic and religious groupings. Anecdotal evidence suggests a demand for books dealing with English and Maths at Key Stage 2 particular amongst Afro-Caribbean parents. There are also several Saturday schools being established to provide self- help particularly in Maths and English some organised by Afro-Caribbean organisations. This demand will benefit other groups as well. The results of Creaser and Sumsion's report suggest that Pateman is correct in suggesting that class is still an issue (7). There may even be a linkage between class and groups where there is low library usage in that individual members of the group may well tend to be in the social classes where library usage is low. The highest concentrations of Moslems are in East London whereas the Asian communities in West London tend to be in more affluent boroughs and tend to be Hindus or Sikhs.

The CIPFA statistics for the London Boroughs as a whole show a considerable decline over the period between 1996/7 and 2000/1. There are a few exceptions with increases in Lambeth, Southwark and Newham all of which are relatively deprived boroughs. Lambeth still had the lowest issues but there was evidence of improvement (it should be noted that CIPFA performance statistics record issued per 1000 population and not gross issues) although they are probably not going to reach the level of suburban areas.

There is a need for more detailed research into which groups are using libraries and which ones aren't. Regression analysis alone will not be sufficient, as it will only work for larger groups where percentages vary between boroughs. It is unlikely to work for relatively dispersed groups such as the Chinese community or Sikhs, where there is heavy concentration in Ealing and a relatively dispersed population elsewhere in London. Regression analysis will also only show a correlation, it will not explain the reason for differing usage patterns. Official statistics will not necessarily show detailed information about communities as the categories in census data tends to be broad or, only covers larger groups. The presence of a specific concentration of Tamil speakers within one ward in Waltham Forest came to light through anecdotal evidence when an election agent in a council by-election had targeted them. The agent said they had deduced the presence by surnames on the electoral roll. In a very close result, the agent's candidate won. It is conceivable that there will be similarities between library usage amongst various groupings and educational achievement results including gender differences within an ethnic group, the data in this article shows a limited similarity but more research is required.

Andrew Hudson

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Reading Orwell in Havana (1)

John Pateman

"Mr Jones, of the Manor Farm, had locked the hen houses for the night, but was too drunk to remember to shut the pop holes. With the ring of light from his lantern dancing from side to side he lurched across the yard, kicked off his boots at the back door, drew himself a last glass of beer from the barrel in the scullery, and made his way up to bed, where Mrs Jones was already snoring" (2)

As I sat in the National Library of Cuba reading this opening paragraph of *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, I had cause to consider its relevance to the reality of contemporary Cuba, and the availability of Orwell's works in Cuban libraries.

Animal Farm is probably one of the most well known political novels ever written. Subtitled, *A Fairy Story*, it is an allegory about totalitarian regimes. Mr Jones was the Tsar and Manor Farm was Imperial Russia. But Orwell made it clear that though *Animal Farm* was "primarily a satire on the Russian Revolution" it was intended to have a wider application. It has been suggested that *Animal Farm* could also be applied to Cuba. Cabrera Infante, for example, wrote that "the resemblance of Cuba to *Animal Farm* is so real that one thinks of its sequel, *Return to the Isle of the Parrots.*" (3). But there are many people who disagree with this analysis, including Isaac Saney:

"Cuba is almost invariably portrayed as a totalitarian regime, a veritable 'gulag' guided and controlled by one man: Fidel Castro. However, this position cannot be sustained once the reality of Cuba is assessed on its own merits. Extensive democratic popular participation in decision making is at the centre of the Cuban model of governance." (4)

This paper is also about assessing the reality of Cuba on its own merits, and not on the propaganda of its enemies. I was prompted to write this paper by some comments made by Robert Kent and his so-called "Friends of Cuban Libraries" (sic). Robert Kent alleges that no works by George Orwell are available in any library or bookshop in Cuba:

"What totalitarian regime would allow its citizens to read the works of Orwell? In actual fact, Orwell's classic books are regarded as 'subversive' by the Cuban regime. One of the 'subversive' book tiles is Orwell's 'Animal Farm'. So much for the Cuban government's mendacious claim that Orwell's books are available to the public in Havana's National Library, or anywhere else in Cuba for that matter." (5)

What my research shows is that the works of George Orwell are available in Cuban libraries. I also consider the presence of some other English language authors in Cuban libraries; and the presence of some Cuban authors in British libraries. In addition, I look at the position of those Cuban authors who are

allegedly banned from Cuban libraries – such as Reinaldo Arenas – and show that their works are available on the shelves of Cuban libraries.

By way of context I make some general observations about the nature of Cuban libraries and the network of bookshops selling books at affordable prices. Finally, I take a closer look at Cuba's so-called "independent libraries" and explore the true nature of their alleged independence.

Greene, Hemingway and Shakespeare

The first question I asked myself was, is it reasonable to expect to find the works of George Orwell on the shelves of Cuban libraries? Cuba is a small, poor, developing country with historical connections to Spain, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. Why, then, should it automatically have the novels of a mid twentieth century British author in its libraries? When resources are scarce – and made worse by the illegal US blockade – why should Cuban librarians decide to select Orwell when they have so many other books to choose and so little money to spend?

One argument, I am sure, is that George Orwell is a significant modern writer and the author of some timeless classics such as *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1949). This alone, it could be argued, would justify his place in any library in the world. For example, just before Orwell died in 1950 Desmond MacCarthy wrote to him saying "You have made an indelible mark on English literature…you are among the few memorable writers of your generation". It was *Animal Farm* together with *Nineteen Eighty Four* which brought Orwell world wide fame. *Animal Farm* was translated into all the principal European languages as well as Persian, Telugu, Icelandic, and Ukranian.

For this argument to be fully legitimate we would have to apply the same reasoning to all of the other modern English language writers and also expect to find their classic works in Cuban libraries. We would then have to prove that the reason why George Orwell does not appear is because of Cuban state censorship. Let us then look at the presence of some other modern English language writers in Cuban libraries – Graham Greene and Ernest Hemingway – and also the presence of that most well known author of English literature, William Shakespeare.

Graham Greene was born in 1904. On coming down from Balliol College, Oxford, he worked for four years as sub-editor on *The Times*. He established his reputation with his fourth novel, *Stamboul Train*. In 1935 he made a journey across Liberia, described in *Journey Without Maps*, and on his return was appointed film critic of the *Spectator*. In 1926 he had been received into the Roman Catholic Church and visited Mexico in 1938 to report on the religious persecution there. As a result he wrote *The Lawless Roads* and, later, his famous novel *The Power and the Glory*.

Brighton Rock was published in 1938 and in 1940 he became literary editor of the Spectator. The next year he undertook work for the Foreign Office and was stationed in Sierra Leone from 1941 to 1943. This later produced his novel, *The Heart of the Matter*, set in West Africa. Other novels include *The End of the*

Affair, The Quiet American, Travels With My Aunt, The Honorary Consul and *The Captain and the Enemy.*
But the novel which put Graham Greene on the map in Cuba was *Our Man in Havana* (1958). Set on the very eve of the Revolution, this darkly comic novel evokes Havana in the 1950s through the misadventures of a vacuum cleaner salesman turned reluctant spy. All of the action in this novel takes place in Havana, including the Hotel Inglaterra where Graham Greene stayed while he was writing it. This hotel and other scenes in the novel have become part of the tourist trail. As a result Graham Greene's books can be found in many libraries and bookshops in Cuba.

Another author who can be found in most Cuban libraries and bookshops is Ernest Hemingway, who was born in 1899 at Oak Park, a highly respectable suburb of Chicago, where his father, a keen sportsman, was a doctor. He was the second of six children. The family spent holidays in a lakeside hunting lodge in Michigan, near Indian settlements. Although highly energetic and successful in all school activities, Ernest twice ran away from home before joining the Kansas City *Star* as a cub reporter in 1917. Next year he volunteered as an ambulance driver on the Italian front and was badly wounded. This inspired his novel *A Farewell to Arms* (1929).

Returning to America he began to write features for the Toronto *Star Weekly* in 1919 and was married in 1921. That year he came to Europe as a roving correspondent and covered several large conferences. In France he came into contact with Gertrude Stein – later they quarrelled – Ezra Pound, and James Joyce. He covered the Greco-Turkish war in 1922. *Three Stories and Ten Poems* was given a limited publication in Paris in 1923. Thereafter he gradually took to a life of bull fighting – *Death in the Afternoon* (1932) - big game hunting, and deep sea fishing, visiting Spain during the Civil War, which he wrote about in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940).

Towards the end of his life Hemingway lived mostly in Cuba. It is possible to visit his house – the Finca Vigia – on the outskirts of Havana and see his fishing boat, the *Pilar*. There is also a bust of him at the fishing village of Cojimar and, until a few years ago, you could have your photograph taken with his old fishing companion, Gregorio Fuentes, who died aged 101. In Old Havana you can see the room which he stayed in at the Ambos Mundos Hotel. The lobby of the hotel contains a picture gallery of Hemingway and his friends. You can also visit his favourite bars and drink his favourite Cuban cocktails. At El Floridita, where there is a life size model of him sitting at the bar, you can try a daiquiri. And at La Bodeguita del Medio you can taste a mohito.

While sipping your cocktail you could be reading one of several novels which Hemingway wrote about Cuba, including that most famous of all his works, *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952). This tale of a local fisherman's epic struggle won Hemingway the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954. Hemingway donated the prize to the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre, Cuba's patron saint. *Islands in the Stream* (1970) is based on the author's experiences hunting Nazi submarines during World War II.

To Have and Have Not (1937) is an exciting account of illegal trade between Havana and Florida. *By Line* (1968) includes several journalistic articles and

despatches from Cuba. All of these works can be found in Cuban libraries and bookstores.

The final English language author I would like to consider is William Shakespeare, who needs no introduction. Shakespeare is probably the nearest figure that Britain has to a national hero. His works have been translated into many languages, and at any one time his plays are being performed somewhere around the world. It is not surprising, therefore, that Shakespeare is to be found in most Cuban libraries and bookshops.

It is easy to understand why Hemingway's books are so evident in Cuban libraries. He lived in Cuba and there are a number of books written by Cuban authors about his life and works, among the best of which is *Hemingway in Cuba* (1984) by Norberto Fuentes. It is also easy to understand why Graham Green and William Shakespeare are well represented in Cuban libraries. But what about the many other modern English language authors who were contemporaries of George Orwell? Their works are not routinely present in Cuban libraries and book shops. Does this mean that they have been banned by the Cuban government? There is no reason why Orwell should be more present in Cuban libraries than any other modern English language writer. But Orwell is present in Cuban libraries while many other modern English language authors are not. This is evidence that there is no deliberate policy on behalf of the Cuban government to systematically and ideologically ban Orwell from the state run libraries.

Carpentier, Guillen and Marti

Before looking at the presence of Orwell in Cuban libraries in more detail it is worth, for a moment, to look at the situation "through the other end of the telescope". If it is reasonable to expect that English language authors should be present in Cuban libraries, is it not also reasonable to expect that Cuban authors should be present in British libraries? I put this theory to the test using the Lincolnshire Public Library Service which I manage in the UK. Lincolnshire libraries have a vast book collection and a generous purchasing budget which is far in excess of what Cuban public libraries can afford to spend on books. How, then, did Lincolnshire compare when I applied the "Orwell test" in reverse? To make it a fair test I used what are probably the three best well known Cuban authors, the novelist Alejo Carpentier, the poet Nicolas Guillen, and Cuba's national hero Jose Marti.

Alejo Carpentier was born in Havana in 1904 and he was one of the founders of the Cuban Minority Group (*Grupo Minorista*) in which artistic, political and ideological problems were discussed. In 1927 he was imprisoned after signing the Minority Group's manifesto, which anticipated the uprising of the Cuban Revolution and is regarded as a preceding document. In 1945, disliking the political atmosphere in Cuba, he went to Venezuela, where he lived for fourteen years. Immediately after the Cuban Revolution in 1959 he returned to Havana and was appointed Vice President of the National Council of Culture and, later, Professor of the History of Culture at the University of Havana and Minister Plenipotentiary. In 1962 he became Director of the Cuban State Publishing House which, within four and a half years, had published nearly seventy million volumes, which ranged from texts for the Campaign against Illiteracy to avant-garde literature.

Alejo Carpentier's novels, which have been translated into twenty two languages, include *Ecue-yamba-O* (1933), *El Reino de Este Mundo* (1949 - *The Kingdom of This World*), *Los Pasos Perdidos* (1953 – *The Lost Steps*), *El Acoso* (1956 – *The Pursuit*), and *El Siglo de las Luces* (1963 – *Explosion in the Cathedral*). A history of Cuban music is among his major works, and he has also written *Poemes des Antilles, La Pasion Noire, Blue,* and some texts for music and ballet. In 1958 he published a book of short stories, *Guerra de Tempo* (*The War of Time*) and he also wrote a volume of stories inspired by the transformations brought about in Cuban society by the Revolution.

There are nine works by Alejo Carpentier in Lincolnshire Libraries: *Acoso* (1966), *Appa y la sombre* (1979), *Explosion in a Cathedral*, *Kingdom of this World* (1975), *Reasons of State* (1976), *Recurso del Metodo* (1974), *Siglo de las Luches* (1965), *The Chase* (1990) and *War of Time*. This is a fair representation but does not include some of Carpentier's classic works such as *The Lost Steps*. It is in this novel that the great Cuban writer develops his theory of Magic Realism. Not stocking *The Lost Steps* in Lincolnshire Libraries would be the equivalent of not stocking *Animal Farm* by George Orwell in Cuban libraries - which is not the case because there is a copy of *Animal Farm* at the National Library in Havana.

Nicolas Guillen was born in 1902 at Camaguey, which is one of the main centres of Cuban poetry. Guillen studied in public and religious schools in his native city, but he was most influenced by his father, a staunch supporter of *belles letres*, who had fought in the Cuban liberation army and had been assassinated in the street in 1917 by his political enemies, at a time when the republic writhed under the apparent power of liberal and conservative politicians and suffered repeated interventions. After his father's death Guillen tried his hand at several printing jobs, wrote articles and chronicles for local magazines and newspapers, and tried to settle in Havana, where he planned to attend law school. But one year later, he returned to Camaguey. He was eighteen years old and felt drawn to the literary trends of the time.

He began his career as a writer with *Motivos de Son* (1930) which examined the issues of Blacks in Cuban culture. Next came *Songoro cosongo* (1931), *West Indies Ltd.* (1934), *Espana* (1937), *Cantos para soldados y sones para turistas* (1937), *El son entero* (1947), *La paloma de vuelo popular* (1958) and *Elegias* (1958). The unyielding liberty that drove his poetry, always surrounded by hostile circumstances, brought about political persecution and led him to exile. After 1959, Guillen's works became more jubilant and musical. His long years of waiting for social improvements were over and his dreams came true. Among others, his books *Tengo* (1964), *Poemas de amor* (1964), *El gran zoo* (*The Great Zoo* - 1967), *La rueda dentada* (1972), *El diario que a diario* (1972) and *Por el mar de las Antillas anda un barco de papel* (1977), date back to that time. Guillen was the Revolution's official poet and has been widely translated. Apart from his political poems, Guillen is best known for his very rhythmical Afro-Cuban works, which have often been set to music.

There is only one work by Nicolas Guillen in Lincolnshire libraries: *El libro de loss ones* (1993). This is very disappointing because Guillen is Cuba's national poet and the equivalent of Britain's Lord Tennyson, who was born in Lincolnshire. The

Tennyson Collection is held at Lincoln Central Library. For Lincolnshire Libraries not to stock Guillen's classic collection of poems, *The Great Zoo,* would be the equivalent of Cuban libraries not stocking *Nineteen Eighty Four* by George Orwell – which is not the case because there are three copies of *Nineteen Eighty Four* at the National Library in Havana.

Cuba's national hero, Jose Marti, was born to Spanish immigrant parents in Havana in 1853. While still in high school, Marti became involved in anti-colonial activities, and in 1869 he published a political tract and the first issue of a newspaper called *La Patria Libre*. A war of independence had broken out in Oriente the previous year, and the Spanish colonial authorities were in no mood to allow criticism. In October 1869 Marti was arrested on treason charges, and in April 1870 he was sentenced to six years of hard labour. He was later deported to Spain where he graduated from law school in 1874. Marti went to Mexico City and got a job with a newspaper in 1875. He got married in 1877 and obtained a teaching post in Guatemala.

The First War of Independence ended in 1878 and Marti was able to return to Cuba under a general amnesty. In 1879 his conspiratorial activities and anti-colonial statements at public debates led to his arrest and a second sentence of exile to Spain. After travelling to France, the US and Venezuela, Marti finally settled in New York City, where he was to remain until just three and a half months prior to his death. In New York, Marti served as a correspondent for the Buenos Aires newspaper *La Nacion* and the Caracas paper *La Opinion Nacional*. His columns describing the North American scene made him well known throughout Latin America, and he was appointed consul of Uruguay in New York. In 1892 Marti's relentless advocacy of Cuban independence and his organisational work in New York and Florida led to his election as chief delegate of the newly formed Partido Revolucionario Cubano.

On 11 April 1895 Marti, the Dominican general Maximo Gomez, and four others landed near Baracoa in eastern Cuba to launch the Second War of Independence. They soon made contact with rebels led by Antonio Maceo, but on 19 May 1895 Marti was killed during a brief skirmish with the Spanish at Dos Rios on the Cauto River in today's Granma Province. Deprived of their political leader, the Cubans fought on under the military leadership of Maceo and Gomez, only to have imminent victory snatched from them by US intervention three years later.

In his own time Marti was best known for essays that set out his vision of a secular republic and warned of the threat to Cuba from sporadic US imperialism (the US had annexed half of Mexico less than four decades earlier). Although history was to confirm his worst fears in this regard, it is Marti's poetry that is most appreciated today. In literary circles, Marti is regarded as one of the initiators of the school of modernism in Latin American poetry. Decades after his death, lines from Marti's *Versos Sencillos* (1891) were incorporated into the best known Cuban song of all time, *Guajira guantanamera.*

Anyone hoping to understand Cuba needs some knowledge of Marti's poems, essays and letters. Marti wrote prolifically and his works are collected in over 30 volumes, most of which have been translated into English. It is all the more shocking and surprising to find, therefore, that there are no works at all by Jose

Marti in Lincolnshire libraries. This is the equivalent of discovering that there are no works by William Shakespeare in Cuban libraries, which is definitely not the case

What conclusions can we draw from this test? In the same way that many English language writers do not appear in Cuban libraries (with the notable exceptions of Graham Greene, Ernest Hemingway and George Orwell), so many Cuban authors (including classics by the national hero Jose Marti) do not appear in British public libraries. But just because they are not in the library does not mean that they have been banned. The reason why these books are not on the shelves has more to do with book budgets, stock selection policies and the needs of library users, rather than state censorship. I will now consider the specific case of George Orwell and his place in Cuban libraries.

George Orwell

Eric Arthur Blair (George Orwell) was born in 1903 in India, where his father worked for the Civil Service. The family moved to England in 1907 and in 1917 Orwell entered Eton, where he contributed regularly to the various college magazines. From 1922 to 1927 he served with the Imperial Police in Burma, an experience that inspired his first novel, *Burmese Days* (1934). Several years of poverty followed. He lived in Paris for two years before returning to England, where he worked successively as a private tutor, school teacher and book shop assistant, and contributed reviews and articles to a number of periodicals. *Down and Out in Paris and London* was published in 1933.

In 1936 he was commissioned by Victor Gollancz to visit areas of mass unemployment in Lancashire and Yorkshire, and *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) is a powerful description of the poverty he saw there. At the end of 1936 Orwell went to Spain to fight for the Republicans and was wounded. *Homage to Catalonia* is his account of the Civil War. He was admitted to a sanatorium in 1938 and from then on was never fully fit. He spent six months in Morocco and there wrote *Coming Up for Air*. During the Second World War he served in the Home Guard and worked for the BBC Eastern Service from 1941 to 1943. As literary editor of *Tribune* he contributed a regular page of political and literary commentary, and he also wrote for the *Observer* and later the *Manchester Evening News*.

His unique political allegory, *Animal Farm*, was published in 1945, and it was this novel, together with *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1949), which brought him world wide fame. It is these two political novels in particular, with their subject matter of totalitarian regimes, that are at the heart of the debate about Orwell's presence in Cuban libraries. On one side of the debate we have Robert Kent, "The Friends of Cuban Libraries" and their supporters. On the other side of the debate we have Eliades Acosta, former Director of the Cuban National Library, ASCUBI (The Cuban Library Association) and their supporters.

The purpose of my visit to Cuba in October 2005 was to examine both sides of this debate and to look for evidence that the works of George Orwell can be found on the shelves of Cuban libraries. My first port of call was the National Library of Cuba, Biblioteca Nacional de Cuba "Jose Marti". Built in 1957 the library has pride of place in the Plaza de La Revolucion, where all the major

national ceremonies are held, including May Day (1 May) and Moncada Day (26 July). Havana's main library occupies 16 floors and contains over 4 million books. Books in the circulating collection can be borrowed. Any one can use the library as long as they produce a satisfactory form of identification, such as an I.D. Card, which is issued to all Cuban citizens. It is much easier for an ordinary Cuban citizen (rather than a researcher, academic or journalist) to access the Cuban National Library, than it is for an ordinary British citizen to access the British Library (where bone fide credentials are required).

Having deposited my bag at the cloakroom and given my passport as proof of identity I was able to move around the library and visit its various sections. I made straight for the literature section and consulted the card catalogue which any library user can utilise. I quickly located the catalogue cards relating to George Orwell and found that fifteen of his works were available in The National Library: *Animal Farm, Shooting an Elephant, Critical Essays* (two copies), *Nineteen Eighty Four* (three copies), *A Clergyman's Daughter, A Collection of Essays, Coming Up for Air* (two copies), *Homage to Catalonia, Keep the Aspidrastra Flying, The Road to Wigan Pier*, and *La Marca.*

The fact that I could so easily find fifteen works by George Orwell in the National Library within ten minutes of entering the building immediately contradicted the allegation by Robert Kent that:

"What totalitarian regime would allow its citizens to read the works of Orwell? In actual fact, Orwell's classic books are regarded as 'subversive' by the Cuban regime. One of the 'subversive' book tiles is Orwell's 'Animal Farm'. So much for the Cuban government's mendacious claim that Orwell's books are available to the public in Havana's National Library, or anywhere else in Cuba for that matter."

Finding Orwell's books in a card catalogue is one thing – seeing the actual book is another. The Cuban National Library, like the British Library, has a closed access policy. If you want to look at a book you have to call it up by filling in a request card. Like any other Cuban library user, I filled in some request cards and gave them to the staff at the enquiry desk. From the fifteen available titles I chose four at random – *Animal Farm, Shooting an Elephant, Critical Essays*, and *Nineteen Eighty Four*. All four books arrived about twenty minutes later. They were all in fair condition but showed signs of considerable usage. *Animal Farm*, in particular, was in a somewhat battered state and the front cover was loose. The books had date stamps indicating that they had been borrowed from the library.

And so I settled down in the National Library of Cuba to read the opening paragraph of *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, a book that was allegedly banned in Cuba. So much for Robert Kent's mendacious claim that Orwell's books are denied to the public in Havana's National Library, or anywhere else in Cuba for that matter. I was also able to disprove another allegation made by Robert Kent that:

"Cuban citizens are routinely denied access to books which criticise the regime. Access to forbidden books, kept locked away in special closed areas of the

official libraries, is restricted to a few 'trustworthy' readers such as reporters for the government run press." (6)

I had proven that there are no "forbidden books kept locked away in special closed areas of the official libraries". I had arrived at the library unannounced and had joined the library in the same way as any other Cuban library user. There are no books "restricted to a few 'trustworthy' readers such as reporters for the government run press". The Orwell books I requested were in a public access card catalogue and I was able to call them up using the same request system as any other Cuban library user.

There are 19 references to George Orwell on the National Library website, which can be found at www.bnjm.cu. In comparison, there are 6 references to Graham Greene and 33 references to Ernest Hemingway. One of the Orwell references includes the following quote: "If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear."(George Orwell, 1945). Robert Kent and the "Friends of Cuban Libraries" do not want to hear the truth which is that George Orwell can be found in Cuban libraries.

The Biblioteca Nacional "Jose Marti" is not the only library in Havana which has books by George Orwell. I also found his works at the Biblioteca "Fernandez Ortiz" which was founded in 1793. This library, which forms part of the Instituto de Literatura y Linguistica (Institute of Literature and Linguistics), is probably the best source of novels and non-Spanish texts in Havana. As with the National Library, I arrived unannounced and was able to use the library on production of a suitable form of ID, in my case a passport. Other library patrons were using their Cuban ID cards. I deposited my bag and headed for the card catalogue. This contained two books by George Orwell: *Down and Out in London and Paris* and *Nineteen Eighty Four.* As at the National Library, the Biblioteca "Fernandez Ortiz" (in common with many UK academic libraries) has a closed access system, and I had to call up the two Orwell books by filling in request cards. They arrived very quickly and, as before, they showed signs of heavy usage.

And so I sat down at the Biblioteca "Fernandez Ortiz" and read the opening paragraph of *Nineteen Eighty Four* by George Orwell, a book which Robert Kent and "The Friends of Cuban Libraries" say does not exist in Cuba. I think that Robert Kent probably associates himself with Winston Smith, the main character in *Nineteen Eighty Four*, who has no heroic qualities, only a wistful longing for truth and decency. In reality, the press releases regularly issued by Robert Kent could have come straight from Orwell's 'Thought Police', who operate on the principle that if you say something over and over again it must become the truth. Robert Kent also uses a technique similar to Orwell's 'Newspeak' which progressively narrows the range of ideas and independent thought.

I was very quickly and easily able to establish that George Orwell's works are alive and well and living in Cuban libraries. Any Cuban citizen can access these libraries, Orwell's books appear in public access card catalogues, and they can be called up using the standard request system. It is just as easy for a citizen of Havana to access George Orwell via the state library system as it is for a resident of Lincolnshire to obtain one of his books through the public library service. There are 82 works by George Orwell in Lincolnshire Libraries, which is

what you would expect given that he is a major British author. He has been described as

"One of the most influential English writers of the twentieth century" (Robert McCrum, *Observer*)

"Matchlessly sharp and fresh…The clearest and most compelling English prose style this century" (John Carey, *Sunday Times*)

"The finest English essayist of his century…His work endures, as lucid and vigorous as the day it was written" (Paul Gray, *Time*)

Given his importance as a writer it is reassuring to know that the Cuban people have access to his works so that they can read what he actually wrote, rather than just read about other people's opinions of what he wrote and what this might mean for Cuba. George Orwell died nine years before the Cuban Revolution so we will never know what he thought about the changes bought about in Cuban society in 1959. A symposium on Cuba attended by George Orwell, Graham Greene and Ernest Hemingway would have engendered some very lively debate I am sure! George Orwell would have been pleased to know that his books are in Cuban libraries and he would have opposed the way in which Robert Kent and others have used his name and works for their own political ends. The most important fact is that George Orwell is not banned in Cuba and I will now turn my attention to some other authors who Robert Kent claims are also "censured" in Cuba.

Arenas, Infante and Manach

One of the most celebrated contemporary Cuban authors in recent years is Reinaldo Arenas, who was born in Holguin in 1943 into a poor, rural Cuban family. At the age of fifteen he joined Castro's guerrillas against Batista's right wing regime. After the triumph of the Revolution in 1959 he moved to Havana where he worked for INRA, the National Institute for Agrarian Reform. In 1963 he started working at the National Library, where he wrote his first novel *Singing from the Well*. In 1965 he received an award for this novel from the Cuban Writers and Artists Union (UNEAC). In 1966 he received another award from UNEAC for his second novel, *The Ill Fated Peregrinations of Fray Servando* (which was published in the U.S. under the title *Hallucinations*). He was also the author of *The Palace of the White Skunks*, *Farewell to the Sea*, *Old Rosa: A Novel in Two Stories*, *El Central: a Cuban Sugar Mill*, *Graveyard of the Angels* and *The Doorman* as well as collections of short stories, essays, experimental theatre pieces, and poetry.

Arenas left Cuba during the Mariel exodus in 1980. But America could never replace his beloved Cuba, and his anti-Castro stance made him unsympathetic to many American intellectuals. The final irony was his battle with AIDs, which dominated the last years of his life until he committed suicide in New York on 7 December 1990, at the age of 47. His autobiography *Antes que anochezca* (*Before Night Falls*) was begun before Arenas left Cuba and was completed in the last stage of the disease.

There are 14 references to Arenas on the National Library website and I found three books by Reinaldo Arenas in the public access catalogue of the Biblioteca "Fernandez Ortiz": *Celestino antes del Alba, Orestes de Noche, Libro de las Exhortations Alamar.* I called up all three books, using the standard request system, and received them within about ten minutes. That is how easy it is for any Cuban citizen to obtain the works of Reinaldo Arenas, an author who is allegedly banned in Cuba. In the same way that Arenas is not banned in Cuba, neither is homosexuality. According to Joseph Mutti, the situation for gays and lesbians has improved as the Cuban Revolution has progressed:

"*The release of the anti-Castro, and arguably misleading, film 'Before Night Falls' – about the life of gay Cuban writer Reinaldo Arenas – refuelled discussion about Cuba's treatment of homosexuals. Cuba is now probably the most easy going of all Latin American and Caribbean countries in terms of its acceptance of gay culture and lifestyle*" (7)

Reinaldo Arenas himself also admitted, in *Before Night Falls*, that gay men had considerable freedom in Cuba:

"*In Cuba gays were not confined to a specific area of a club or beach. Everybody mingled and there was no division that would place the homosexual on the defensive. This has been lost on more advanced societies, where the homosexual has had to become a sort of sexual recluse and separate himself from the supposedly non-homosexual society, which undoubtedly also excludes him*" (8)

When Arenas arrived in Florida he found that there was less tolerance towards the gay community than there had been in Cuba. For more information about Cuba and Homosexuality see *Machos, Maricones and Gays* by Ian Lumsden. It is interesting to note that, among the acknowledgements to those who helped him to research this book, the first people that Lumsden would like to thank are "the staff at the Jose Marti National Library." Lumsden concludes by saying that:

"*There is no reason to believe that homosexuals any more than women or blacks would in most respects benefit from the overthrow of the revolution, which with all its defects may yet be recognised as having done more for their ultimate liberation than any previous Cuban regime.*" (9)

There are four works by Reinaldo Arenas in Lincolnshire Libraries: *Before Night Falls* (1993), *Cantando En El Pozo, Lazarillo de Tormes* (1984) and *Palacio de las Blanguisimas Mofetas* (1980).

Another Cuban author who is allegedly banned in Cuba is Guillermo Cabrera Infante, He grew up in Cuba under the dictator Batista and knew Che Guevara and Fidel Castro personally. Infante left Cuba in October 1965 and lived in exile in England for the rest of his life. He wrote novels, stories, critical essays, articles and screenplays, and lectured at Universities from Cambridge to Chicago. He was the author of *Infante's Inferno*, *Holy Smoke*, *View of Dawn in the Tropics*, *Writes of Passage* and a collection of film criticism, *A Twentieth Century Job.* One of his best known works is *Tres Tristes Tigres (Three Trapped Tigers*), a sharply comic novel of pre-Revolutionary Havana in which the hedonistic city itself is a protagonist.

Infante also wrote *Mea Cuba,* a political autobiography and personalised account of the literary / political scene during the early years of the Revolution. This collection of essays and memoirs span the entire period of Infante's writing career, from 1968 (*Perversions of History*) to 1993 (*The Bird of Paradise Lost*). There are 27 references to Infante on the National Library website. One of these references is an article by Rhonda L. Neugebauer in which she interviews Eliades Acosta, the former Director of the National Library. Acosta explained that there are no banned books in Cuba and that the National Library buys a diverse and inclusive range of stock:

"This diversity and inclusion is easily verifiable--by looking in the library catalogs and perusing the shelves, which we did in all the libraries we visited. We located books on human rights (including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights), intellectual freedom, democracy and capitalism. And, some librarians were shown circulation records for books written by dissenters, defectors, and Miami-"exiles", including Reinaldo Arenas and Cabrera Infante, although some volumes are not allowed to circulate outside the library due to fear of being stolen or damaged. In a later interview with a U.S. newspaper reporter, Acosta reiterated the main problems for libraries in Cuba; "There are no banned books, only those we don't have the money to buy. The biggest problem we have is lack of resources. With such scarcity, hard choices have to be made as to which books to buy. Similar choices are made in every country. We don't buy racist, xenophobic, anti-Semitic literature although important books such as Hitler's Mein Kampf are held in the national library." (10)

There is a reference in *Mea Cuba* to the Casa de las Americas, when someone points out to Infante that his books are "in the library of the Casa de las Americas". Infante responds that in order for people to access these books the person requesting them must "take responsibility with his name, address, occupation and reason for reading them". This is presented as something sinister when, as any user of any reference, academic or research library will tell you, it is common practice to request details of library users such as name, address, occupation and reason for wanting to access the collection. These questions were asked of me when I visited the research library of the Casa de las Americas, the Biblioteca "Jose Antonio Echevaria". There are also two bookshops at the Casa de Las Americas – a bookshop selling general literature and poetry books, and Libreria Rayuela, selling art books, international literature, videos of Cuban films and CDs. Casa de las Americas is also a publishing house and has a research library, The Casa's collection of over 6,000 works of art are displayed in four galleries. Lincolnshire libraries have only one book by Infante: *Writes of Passage* (1993).

Jorge Manach is also supposed to be a banned author in Cuba but I found seven of his works at the National Library: *Marti el Apostal* (two copies), *Jose Marti Torro II, Pasado Vigente, El Espiritu de Marti, El Persamiento Politico y Social de Marti,* and *Significacion del Centenario Martoano.* There are 24 references to Manach on the National Library website, including the following:

"The National Library has 8920 magazine titles, yearbooks, newspapers, Cuban monographs in series, and a representative collection of foreign series. Among the most important materials are: 'Revista Avance' (Advance Magazine)

containing works by Jorge Mañach, Juan Marinello, Jose Sacarias Tallet, Agustin Acosta, Regino Botti, Manuel Navarro Luna, Fernando Ortiz and other authors of outstanding advanced thought from the critical decade during the life of the publication (1927-1930)"

I also found nine books by Manach at the public library Biblioteca "Ruben Martinez Villena". Once again, I just arrived at this library, checked in my bag, and joined by using my passport as ID. I was able to consult a public access card catalogue and call up the books I wanted to see by using the standard request card system.

The Biblioteca "Ruben Martinez Villena" is in Old Havana and is open from 8.15am – 7.45pm Monday to Friday and 8.15am to 4.15 pm on Saturday. This amounts to 65.5 hours of public access per week, which is far in excess of many UK public libraries. Long opening hours are one feature of the socially inclusive nature of Cuba's public libraries. This library has recently been renovated and now has multimedia facilities, making it easily Cuba's most modern library.

When discussing the issue of "banned" books with key figures of the Cuban Writers and Artists Union (UNEAC), it was indicated that for copyright reasons Infante, Manach and Arenas did not want their works published in Cuba. UNEAC is housed in a beautiful converted mansion with leafy grounds. UNEAC has a research library and the book store is the city's best source for magazines and periodicals on Cuban literature, art and music. UNEAC also has the Café Huron Azul and the patio area is a meeting place for writers and artists, and a popular venue for bands and soloists. There are no books by Jorge Manach in Lincolnshire libraries.

The final Cuban author that I would like to consider in this section is Pedro Juan Gutierrez. His novels give a very gritty street level view of the current realities facing Cuban society. His works can in no way be described as being supportive of the Cuban government. His characters live in the twilight world of Cuba's "parallel economy". *Dirty Havana Trilogy* (2002) contains a series of interlinked stories from Havana's underground. Strong, unforgiving language makes it a powerful read. Gutierrez began his working life at the age of eleven as an ice cream vendor and newsboy. The author of several published works of poetry, he lives in Havana. The fact that he has not fled the country is probably the reason why the "Friends of Cuban Libraries" have not added him to their list of "banned" authors. Lincolnshire libraries have three works by Gutierrez: *Dirty Havana Trilogy* (2001), *Tropical Animal* (2003) and *Insatiable Spider Man* (2005).

It is interesting to note that the works of these "banned" Cuban authors are not widely present in British libraries, if Lincolnshire is anything to go by. Despite the worldwide "celebrity" of authors like Cabrera Infante (who lived in England as an "exile") his most "famous" work, *Mea Cuba*, cannot be found in Lincolnshire libraries. This does not mean that they have been banned or that there has been a deliberate attempt not to purchase them. It just means that they are not in demand and have not been requested by the users of Lincolnshire libraries. Having established that there are no banned authors in Cuba and that it is easy for Cuban citizens to access the many libraries which exist in Cuba, I would now

like to give some more general information about the development of libraries and bookshops in Cuba since 1959.

Libraries and Bookshops

Cuba has an excellent state run public library system and a large network of book shops selling books at affordable prices. Even the smallest town has both a library (biblioteca) and a bookshop (libreria). Before the Revolution in 1959 Cuba had very few libraries and those which did exist were in the cities and their use was restricted to the wealthy and powerful. There were also very few bookshops and the price of books was well beyond the reach of the average Cuban. As Silvia Martinez Puentes has said, "the Cuban Book appears with the Revolution":

"Establishing a Cuban publishing house system was a challenge for the Revolution. Before, the publishing of books in Cuba was very limited. A few months after the triumph of the Revolution, in March 1959, Fidel Castro inaugurated the first press with the first book edited by the Revolution: ' El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha' (Don Quixote), by Miguel de Cervantes y Saavedra with an edition of 100,000 copies that was sold for 25 cents" (11)

In March 1959 the Imprenta Nacional de Cuba (Cuban National Press) was created followed by the Editorial Nacional de Cuba (Cuban National Publishing House) directed by Alejo Carpentier. Five years later this became the Instituto Cubano del Libro (Cuban Book Institute – ICL). Cuban books and publishing houses such as Arte y Literatura, Ciencas Sociales, Letras Cubanas, Cientifico-Tecnica, Jose Marti, Gente Nueva and Oriente have played an important role in education, the formation of a universal culture and the defence of national identity.

Since 1959 over one billion books have been printed in Cuba, excluding school text books. Over the last ten years (during the Special Period which followed the collapse of the Soviet Union) the printing of books was affected due to the lack of resources. In 2001 over nineteen million books were printed in Cuba, an increase of nine million in relation to 2000, but nowhere near the fifty million copies pa which were produced before 1990. This problem should be overcome by a new modern printing works named after Alejo Carpentier.

As part of the Cuban government's aim to increase the people's access to books, the Biblioteca Familiar (Family Library) scheme was established. The Family Library is a collection of twenty five titles by well known national and international writers that is sold to the population at a very affordable price. Cubans can also access books at the Havana International Book Fair which takes place each February. The Book Fair travels to over thirty locations in Cuba, is visited by over three million people and sells more than five million books.

Parallel to these developments in publishing there has been the creation of public libraries, newspaper libraries, galleries and museums. In 1963 Cuba had just twenty seven public libraries serving a population of eight million people. By 1980 the number of public libraries had increased to 196, and today Cuba has 364 libraries for a population of eleven million people. The use of Cuban public libraries has increased from 5.4 million people in 1996 to over eight million in

2003. This means that Cuban libraries are used by 72% of the population, compared with just 60% in the UK.

I visited the public library Biblioteca "Enrique Jose Varona" in Marianao, a working class municipality in the suburbs of Havana. Having checked in my bag I joined by simply providing my passport as a form of ID. Cuban public libraries operate an open access system, which means that library users are free to browse among the books on the open shelves. The ground floor included a good selection of adult fiction, including sections on literature from other parts of Latin America and Europe. There were also sections for children and young people, and an auditorium where extension activities such as book readings, story times and other events were held. Upstairs there was the adult non fiction (with a heavy emphasis on science and technology) and the reference collection. The library was very well staffed, which is another feature of Cuban public libraries.

Also of interest in Mariano is the immense Ciudad Escolar Libertad educational complex, established on the site of the old Columbia Military Camp, which Fulgencia Batista flew out of in a tremendous hurry in the early hours of 1 January 1959. Located among the schools on the site is the Museo Nacional de Alfabetizacion, created in homage to participants in the massive 1961 literacy campaign. Exhibits include photos, documents, film footage, personal belongings and letters, which form a testimony of the most successful literacy campaign in history. Over 100,000 people of all ages, one only seven years old, joined brigades formed to eliminate illiteracy in the period between January and December 1961. These days, Cuba's literacy rate is estimated at 96%, the highest in Latin America.

Cuba's high literacy rate is partly sustained by the large network of bookshops selling books at affordable prices. Bookshops exist in every city and town in Cuba, but Havana, being the capital city, is particularly well supplied. The Instituto Cubano del Libro (Cuban Book Institute) has two bookshops. One stocks a wide range of non fiction and modern fiction, while the other (La Bella Havana) covers the tourist market. The Libreria la Internacional offers a fairly wide range of fiction and non fiction books, mainly in Spanish.

Cuban and international literature fills the shelves at the Libreria "Ruben Martinez Villena". Well known authors such as Isabel Allende and Alejo Carpentier are included among the fiction. There are also some cultural journals. La Moderna Poesia is a spacious book shop which specialises in Cuban editions of fiction and non fiction, posters, pens, paints, music, videos and items for children. There are some non Spanish books on politics, Cuban short stories and erotica. The Libreria Atereo Cervantes sells children's books, international literature and Cuban poetry, as well as postcards and posters.

Other bookshops in Havana include: Centro Cultural Literario Habana, Abel Santamaria, Bella Habana, Centenario del Apostol, Fayad Jamis, Fernando Ortiz, Grijalbo Mondadori, Luis Rogelio Nogueras and Jicotencal. Havana also has a book market which is held in the Plaza de Armas. This Mercado de libros has numerous political tracts, books on Che Guevara and the Cuban Revolution, original Gabriel Garcia Marquez novels, plus atlases, encyclopedias and the odd book in English. You can also find some wonderful nineteenth century illustrated books and some great bindings.

So, if Cuba has such a good state library system, why does it also have "independent libraries" as well? The answer to this question will be considered next.

"Independent" Libraries

In the same way that Cuba has "independent journalists" and "independent trade unions" it also has "independent libraries". They are all the offspring of the same mother – the US Torricelli Act which both tightened the blockade and fomented support for "dissident groups" in Cuba, including the "independent libraries". In reality these "independent libraries" are neither "independent" nor "libraries". They are wholly dependent for their funding, support and direction on the U.S. Interests Section (USIS) in Havana. The "directors" of these libraries are not "directors" but full time paid "dissidents". Felipe Perez Roque explains how so-called "dissident groups", including "independent libraries" are formed in Cuba:

"The so-called 'political parties' in Cuba are established through decisions made abroad, decisions made by the government of the United States. They do not come about through an autonomous process, in response to the needs of the Cuban people. And thus we see parties and associations and abbreviations sprouting like mushrooms, then gradually disappearing. Time and again we encounter the words: 'They're all in Miami now', 'They've gone to Miami', 'They're in the United States now'. Sometimes the entire leadership, or every last member of the group. Of course, that was often their real goal; a visa to emigrate to the United States." (12)

The other key words are money, greed, ambition and lack of ethics. Felipe Perez Roque is clear where the money comes from:

"First it is made clear that decisions about the groups are made by outside forces. It is the U.S. Interests Section that decides when a member of one group should switch to another, when a group with three members should join with a group with four members to form a federation, when these two groups should link up with a couple from another band and create an alliance. It's all invented, made up, fake. It would almost make you laugh, if it weren't for the fact that a nation's right to its very existence is at stake, if it weren't for the fact this whole phony apparatus assembled from abroad is used to attack the Revolution and justify the blockade against the Cuban people."   (13)

The "independent libraries" are agents in a much deeper struggle than that between "dissidents" and the Cuban government. What is exposed is the real struggle of a people, a nation, defending its right to self determination, in the face of an imperial policy, a centuries old attempt to enslave it and subjugate it to the designs of a superpower. What is at stake is whether or not Cuba can be an independent country, and whether or not it can win the war being waged against it to take away its independence. The definition of an organisation subject to foreign control is:

"... if it solicits or accepts financial contributions, loans, or support of any kind, directly or indirectly, from, or is affiliated directly or indirectly with, a foreign

government or a political subdivision thereof, or an agent, agency or instrumentality of a foreign government." (14)

This definition does not come from Cuban law but from the Penal Code of the United States. The Penal Code of 2001 also states that:

"Whoever knowingly or willingly advocates, abets, advises, or teaches the duty, necessity, desirability, or propriety of overthrowing or destroying the government of the United States; or whoever, with intent to cause the overthrow or destruction of any such government, prints, publishes, edits, issues, circulates, sells, distributes, or publicly displays any written or printed matter advocating, advising, or teaching the duty, necessity, desirability, or propriety of overthrowing or destroying any government in the United States" is guilty of a crime." (15)

This US Law is more restrictive than Cuban law and the "independent libraries" have broken this law. Supported, funded and directed by the U.S. Interests Section in Havana, these "independent libraries" have printed, published, edited, issued, circulated, sold and distributed literature which advocates, advises and teaches the duty, necessity, desirability and propriety of overthrowing or destroying the Cuban government. As Felipe Perez Roque has said:

"It is sickening to read the testimonies of those who attempt to create 'independent libraries' in the only country in the world where the people have the right to buy books at an accessible price, when everyone knows that books are a luxury of the rich in the rest of the world." (16)

Let us, then, hear some of these testimonies, given by the twelve State Security agents who lived for years in the rank and file of the so called "opposition", "internal dissidence movement", or "independent journalists and librarians".

Otuardo Hernandez Rodriguez became Agent Yanier in March 2001. He joined the Cuban Human Rights Foundation of Camaguey and he was given a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and a number of pamphlets:

"They told me what 'Cubanet' was and showed me an 'independent library'. By August I was already the 'democratically' elected president. When the 20 de Mayo 'independent library' was inaugurated in Sancti Spiritus, each of us had to donate a book. Nine of us showed up at the house of the owner of the alleged 'independent library', Blas Giraldo Reyes Rodriguez, but it had already been inaugurated and it had been something of a disaster, because no one had shown up and there were hardly any books there. To top things off, we'd arrived late, but, nevertheless, I made a statement, and we sang the national anthem with all of the doors and windows open. In the middle of this, an old lady walked by and yelled at the neighbour: 'Look at how drunk those people are, and it's so early in the morning!'" (17)

From the time of its creation in 1996, Cubanet has been a web site devoted to publishing the "articles" created by the "independent journalists", addressing the purported violation of human rights in Cuba. From the start, it has received federal funding from the U.S. government through the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Otuardo became involved with the "independent libraries

project". He set a 'library' up in his own home, which he called the 'Father Felix Varela Independent Library', and he went to the U.S. Interests Section to have it registered:

"The person that talked me into founding the 'library' was Gisela Delgado, whom I met in Havana. She gave us some books, declarations of human rights, and she started to sweet talk us into thinking that we were going to get money, medicine, fax machines, computers, radios. At the time, the administration of the 'libraries project' had undergone a division, one part was in Las Tunas and the other part in Havana. Ramon Colas was in charge in Las Tunas, and Gisela was in charge in Havana. Both called themselves 'library directors'." (18)

Ramon Colas founded and became director of the "independent libraries" project in Cuba. He emigrated to the United States in 2001. On arrival he was taken in by the Cuban Democratic Directorate, and later went on to become a member of the Cuban American National Foundation. From the time of his arrival in the United States, he has approached government officials in search of funding for the "independent libraries" in Cuba, campaigns which have been very successful. He also campaigned for the "independent libraries" at the Committee on Human Rights in Geneva in April 2002 and he sought recognition for his project within the United Nations.

Otuardo went to the U.S. Interests Section in Havana with Mario Mayo, an "independent journalist", where he was given books, blank sheets of paper, envelopes and summaries of news published in the *Miami Herald*. The books he was given included:

"Sketches of the United States, its government, its economy, speeches made by Bush, the sort of book no one was going to bother reading, but we had to take them if we wanted to receive other things as well, such as westerns, dictionaries and children's books. We received instructions about the 'independent libraries' at the U.S. Interests Section. They handed me a list of all the 'libraries' in the country, which was a joke. Mario Mayo himself realised this, because Omar Dario showed up on the list. He told me, 'Omar only has four books, and he doesn't lend them out.' Mario told me how Omar Dario would try to get books from the Interests Section which he could sell. Later on Omar accused Mario of stealing a bunch of English-Spanish dictionaries in order to sell them.

They would hand out one dictionary per library. But there were times when they would let you go into the storage room to choose the books yourself. I didn't get that chance. Nevertheless, I had gotten instructions from Mario about what to do. He told me, 'If they let you into the storage room, look for a box and put all the books that interest you inside it. Then, place all of the other books on top of those, the ones about the United States and human rights, which are the ones the U.S. Interests Section wants us to read in Cuba.' He even told me not to worry about the dictionaries, because they were made with very light paper. A car from the U.S. Interests Section paid me a visit in Camaguey on three occasions and left me shipments of books." (19)

Pedro Serrano Urra became Agent Saul in 1999. At a meeting with James Cason he talked to Pedro about the "independent libraries" and some "independent" publications were distributed by the U.S. Interests Section. The "independent

libraries" were sent books, journals and money on a regular basis. For example: on 12 March 2002, thirty dollars was delivered to Ivan Hernandez, "Coordinator for the Province of Matanzas, as aid for the Independent Libraries Project in Cuba"; on 13 March 2002, thirty dollars was delivered to Julia Cecelia Delgado, "as aid for the Independent Libraries Project in Cuba"; and on 1 August 2002, one hundred and sixty dollars was sent to Enrique Blanco for the "bibliotecas independientes de Cuba".

Yamila Perez Reyes and Noel Ascanio became Agents Celia and Abel in 1992. Yamila became a provincial delegate for the Latin American Federation of Rural Women and secretary of the Francisco Riveron Hernandez "Independent Library".

In March 2002 Noel was one of the signatories to a letter which was sent to the Director of the National Library, Eliades Acosta, who published an article in *Juventud Rebelde* about the "independent libraries":

"The only library that was operating in the Guines Municipality at the time was the one in my house. That library was equipped, from the beginning, with what the U.S. Interests Section gave us. We would pick up books there and they would send us others. They would bring all sorts of things, from 'Disidente' and 'Hispano-Cubana' magazines to samples of universal literature." (20)

Noel was invited to a meeting at the U.S. Interests Section, where he was received by Maryann McKay, who was responsible for the press and culture:

"She asked about our 'independent library' and its activities, its public acceptance and its plans for the future. She asked about the people of Guines and their reading habits. She also gave us books, pamphlets and magazines. There were nearly 40 publications. It was too much for us." (21)

Odilia Collazo Valdes became Agent Tania and was invited to a meeting at the U.S. Interests Section by James Cason. Everyone who attended the meeting was given a bag which contained radios, flashlights, literature, battery chargers, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in huge batches, speeches by U.S. politicians, pronouncements by Bush and magazines.

A constant thread which runs through these testimonies is the active role played by James Cason and the U.S. Interests Section in their funding, support and direction of the "independent libraries". James Cason took up his post on 10 September 2002 and on 16 September he had his initial meeting with members of the "Independent Libraries Project". At another meeting at the U.S. Interests Section on 17 September "the participants spoke about Radio Marti and the 'independent' libraries and press."

On 19 0ctober James Cason visited the province of Cienfuegos and went to the "independent library" in the home of Arturo Hernandez. Their conversation focused on the "independent libraries", the rental of houses, entertainment for young people, the food situation on the island, and the people's reaction to these difficulties.

On 2 November James Cason travelled to Matanzas and handed over four boxes of books, to furnish the "independent" libraries of Ivan Hernandez in the Colon Municipality, Miguel Sigler Amaya in Pedro Betancourt, and Andres Gobea Suarez at Central 6 de Agosto, in Calimete.

On 11 November James Cason held a meeting at his home. At the end of the meeting the Cubans in attendance were presented with short wave radios and a number of books. They were told that they could take any books they wished from a bookcase set up for this purpose.

On 21 November another meeting was held at the home of James Cason. The participants were given four boxes containing copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

On 22 November another meting was held at Cason's home. Those present were given a number of books and newspapers published abroad.

On 26 November James Cason went back to Camaguey and left four boxes of books, pamphlets and newspapers.

On 19 December a "social" gathering was held at the U.S. Interests Section. Each guest was given a bag containing: three VHS tapes, with the three parts of *Una Fuerza Poderosa* (A Powerful Force); the digital version of the book *Como Llego la Noche* (How Night Fell) by Hubert Matos; *Temas Clasicos* (Classic Themes) by Carlos Franqui; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and a portable radio with accessories.

On 9 January 2003 a U.S. Interests Section vehicle delivered a cardboard box to a private residence in Pinar Del Rio, with material to furnish the "independent" libraries of Reynaldo Nunez Vargas – known as the Ileana Ros-Lehtinen Library – and of Rene Onate. They delivered 1,000 copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 50 books and 2000 sheets of paper. They also delivered a box to the home of Victor Rolando Arroyo Carmona, which contained 1000 copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 60 books and 1000 sheets of paper.

On 16 January Cason took part in an activity held at Hector Palacios Ruiz's home to launch the book *Ojos Abiertos* (*Open Eyes*), which gathered some of the "award winning" pieces from the *El Heraldo* contest held in support of the "independent libraries". A "special diploma" was given to Raul Rivero Castaneda "as special recognition of his important work in the Independent Libraries of Cuba." Raul Rivera Castaneda was also rewarded for his participation as a member of the jury of the *El Heraldo* contest.

On 20-23 January Cason went on a tour through Santiago de Cuba and met with three representatives of the "independent" libraries and press. Cason announced that the Spanish embassy had received a container with more than 5,000 books that would be distributed throughout the country. He offered the use of his own home for anything they needed and instructed them to carry out acts of civil disobedience. He delivered four boxes of books, radios, crayons, pens, office materials and pamphlets.

On 2 February Cason held a "Cuban cultural evening" which was attended by "dissidents", U.S. businessmen based in Washington and other Americans who had attended the Havana International Book Fair.

On 4 March Cason went to Pinar del Rio and visited the home of Arroya Carmona, where he distributed a box of books among those present.

"Friends of Cuban Libraries"

Aleida Godinez Soler became Agent Vilma in January 2002. She remembers the arrival of James Cason as Head of the U.S Interests Section in Havana:

"He arrived in Cuba on 10 September 2002 and was meeting with the 'dissidents' a week later, before making contact with the official authorities. He received us in two groups, on the 16th and 17th. I was in the second group. As was customary, radios and books were handed out. The first day that we met, he said he was leaving the doors of his home open to the 'opposition' and that he was willing to collaborate, support, finance and do whatever was necessary."
(22)

Aleida helped to distribute copies of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Contrary to claims made by Robert Kent and the "Friends of Cuban Libraries" it is not illegal for Cubans to own a copy of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, a document that was ratified by Cuba. Aledia was received at the U.S.Interests Section in Havana by Christopher Sibilia "who was a CIA official, someone who didn't make an effort to conceal himself". But someone who did try to conceal himself was Robert Kent, who introduced himself to Aleida as Robert Emmet:

"In February of 1999, an American named Robert Emmet got in touch with some relatives of mine. This man was a messenger of Frank Calzon, from the Center for a Free Cuba. He brought a package the size of a sofa, full of medicines, toiletries, radios, flashlights, cameras, everything. He asked me to take it to Paul Rivero, whom I knew already. He also wanted to go to the Literacy Museum in Ciudad Libertad, but he asked my advice on how to dress, because he didn't want to attract attention. He walked around in shorts, dressed up as an American tourist. I told him this, and he put on a pair of pants and barely opened his mouth.

He gave me money, in two parts. I remember that every time he was going to give me money, he would excuse himself to go to the bathroom, because he carried it in a money belt inside his pants. He gave me 500 dollars in cash: first 300, then 200 more, afterwards. He told me he wanted me to buy a motorcycle, because he's seen me arrive on a bicycle. He also sent 100 dollars to Raul Rivero, a camera, rolls of film, pens.

He introduced himself as a librarian. The 'independent libraries' project was being developed. He was also interested in the 'independent' press, and how it was coming along. He wanted to know what education was like in Cuba. At the Literacy Museum, he asked for very precise details about how the literacy campaign had been carried out. If he wasn't faking it, he was very moved by what he saw. He even told me that literacy had been one of Castro's great

achievements. I have a photo with him taken that day, on February 24. He wanted us to find out where the main leaders of the Revolution lived and take photographs of the outside of their homes. That's why he gave me the camera. He was particularly interested in Carlos Lage. People abroad were saying that Lage could replace Fidel.

He came on behalf of Frank Calzon. He gave me the numbers where I could reach him, including his home number, and told me I could call him every Sunday. Some months later, Calzon started sending me money regularly, through different messengers." (23)

Another account of Aleida's meeting with Robert Kent / Emmet can be found on the National Library website:

"In February 1999 I received a visit from a U.S. citizen who, despite being named Robert Kent, told me that his name was Robert Emmet. He introduced himself to me as a close friend of Cuban-American Frank Calzon, former agent of the Central Intelligence Agency and a resident in the U.S. At that first meeting and only that once did he say that he was a librarian at a public library in New York, although after some hours talking with him, I could understand that his job or profession had nothing to do with his trip to Havana or with the reasons which brought him: to spend money in the Cuban capital coming from terrorists hands.

When he told me he had several things to give me, sent by that common friend, I got my hopes up; since I have always thought highly of libraries I imagined that the least I could get was a good book.

Nevertheless, while I naively waited for my imaginary books my surprise grew. Robert Kent came to Cuba, among other things to plan an attack. I listened patiently, extended my arms, and took the technical equipment brought from the United States in order to stake out the place where the deed would be perpetrated. That was my objective, to listen to him and avoid with my action the murder of the Vice President of the Council of Ministers. And not because of his importance, since I would have done the same thing for the most humble human being.

We talked that first time for several hours and the following days. He was interested in knowing what the domestic counterrevolution thought, although he became engrossed in saying opposition, dissidence, the blockade which strangely he also called embargo. He wanted to know who I thought could replace Fidel Castro. He was interested in knowing about the so-called "independent journalists." He asked me to bring him to deliver money and orders to the salaried mercenaries he interviewed. We passed those February days this way.

He wanted me to bring him to different places, among them the Literacy Museum and to David's house, who was another former State security agent like me. At the Literacy Museum we took a photo together. We both brought our cameras. He saved his memories and I did the same, despite what he is now saying that I have dug up files, which is unnecessary because he knows very well that I have an excellent memory.

Kent prefers to hide his recurring stupidity and never has said that our trip ended with lunch at the Chinese Sichuan Restaurant located in Carlos III Plaza in the heart of the city where we were met by David. Kent ate some delicious rice and shrimp enchiladas accompanied by his Cuban beer and also never said that he used the money they gave him to come to Cuba to give to the opposition to pay for the pleasures of two revolutionaries who joked for years about people like him, who refuse to recognize our talent, our truth and strong politics.

Our goodbye lunch was on February 24, 1999. I'm telling you because it is good that you know what Kent-Emmet's intentions are; that in spite of this he is the head of an organization called Friends of Cuban Libraries, although this refers to so-called Independent Libraries, which all are shameful frauds since they are an invention to justify the money that the USAID-NED distributes and that it is stolen from the U.S. taxpayers to maintain an army of moral criminals within Cuba, in which a large majority don't work or have a minimum of culture (because they don't want it, of course). Reason enough to think that with friends like Robert Kent, you don't need enemies."

So, who is Robert Kent? By day he is a mild mannered librarian working at the New York Public Library. But at night he transforms into the leader of "The Friends of Cuban Libraries" (FCL), an organisation dedicated to supporting "independent libraries" and "intellectual freedom" in Cuba. FCL claims to be an independent organisation but, by Kent's own admission, his visits to Cuba were paid for by Freedom House and the Center for a Free Cuba both of which are, in turn, funded by the US government under Track 2 of the Torericelli Act, to support "dissidents" in Cuba.

The so-called Center for a Free Cuba, based in Washington D.C., was founded by Frank Calzon in October 1997, with the explicit aim of working toward the overthrow of the Cuban Revolution. The Center for a Free Cuba carries out its anti Cuban programmes with funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), as well as from private donations. In 2002 alone, the Center For a Free Cuba received over two million dollars from USAID.

All of its programmes have been aimed at spreading propaganda in Cuba with regard to a supposed political transition and stimulating a market economy, as well as giving support to internal groups such as "independent libraries" and encouraging the international community to play an active role in the promotion of subversive activities on the island. The material aid given to the "independent libraries" has included personal computers, laptops, typewriters, fax machines, photocopiers, short wave radios, cameras, tape recorders and other office supplies, as well as books and journals.

This was what bought Robert Kent, aka Robert Emmet, to Cuba in February 1999. Kent / Emmet was a messenger for Frank Calzon (a US citizen, but Cuban by birth) who, until 1997, was the official director of the Cuban programmes run by Freedom House. Calzon had previously sent emissaries to Cuba in July 1995, January 1996, April 1996 and August 1997. Their instructions were to make contact with the "independent libraries", hand over money and materials, and take photographs of strategic locations. Kent's assignment was to meet up with

Aleida Godinez Soler and hand over cash and supplies. He was also told to photograph the home of Carlos Lage. Aledia alerted the state Security Services and Kent / Emmet was deported from Cuba on the grounds of suspected espionage.

So Robert Kent is not as innocent as he likes to appear. His "Friends of Cuban Libraries" receive US government funding and his trips to Cuba were not just to support "independent libraries" but also to gather intelligence about Cuba's leaders. Given the many assassination plots against Castro and other government figures, this had potentially serious implications. After Kent was deported from Cuba in 1999, Frank Calzon had to use some new intermediaries. In June 2000, for example, Romanian citizen Cornel Ivanciuc and Polish citizen Anna Krystna travelled to Cuba after meeting in Washington with USAID and the State Department. The aim of these meetings was to study aid for "independent libraries". Frank Calzon instructed them to travel to Cuba as emissaries. They brought material aid for the "independent libraries", a mission which was organised and funded by Freedom House. More emissaries were sent to Cuba by Calzon in November 2000 and January 2001.

Reporters Without Borders

Nestor Baguer Sanchez Galarraga became Agent Octavio and established the Cuban Association of Independent Journalists (APIC):

"Reporters Without Borders praised me everywhere and sent me money. That was incredible. As soon as news got out that I was in charge of the Agency and was handing out money, the 'journalists' started descending on my house like ants. Do you know I had no idea that Cuba had so many 'journalists' hidden in the most unlikely jobs and professions? I had a correspondent who was a railway worker in Cienfuegos, who had spent his life hammering away at the railway lines." (24)

In September 1995 the director of Reporters Without Borders, Robert Menard, presented Nestor with paper, typewriter ribbons, a dozen pens and 1000 dollars to fund his so-called press agency. Nestor also had many meetings at the U.S. Interests Section:

"I had to visit the U.S. Interests Section so many times that you wouldn't be able to fit all of the meetings in one book. I have to confess one thing: every time I set foot in there, I would ask myself, 'What sort of independent journalists are we? Independent from what?' The U.S. Interests Section chose the topics for the pseudo-journalists. And not only that, but also, after they were done writing them, before putting them out, they would go to the Interests Section so they could go over them in case there was something in there that was politically inconvenient for them. They would submit them after they had been approved. They complained about censorship in Cuba and I watched them bow down to the censorship of the United States." (25)

Manuel David Orrio del Rosario became Agent Miguel in November 1992. He joined the Cuban Association of "Independent Journalists" (APIC) in 1995. The APIC offices were in the home of Julio Suarez. The director of Reporters Without Borders (RWB), Robert Menard, came to Havana to question Suarez about

money that he was supposed to have distributed, but had kept for himself instead. Reporters Without Borders gave major support to the Cuban Council – the joining together of numerous "opposition" organisations, funded by the U.S. government via the Centre for a Free Cuba, Freedom House and others. In a "certificado" dated August 1996:

"The undersigned, Robert Menard, general secretary of Reporters Without Borders, certifies that our organisation lends financial aid to the independent press agency Cuba Press. Last August 30, Reporters Without Borders delivered the sum of 900 dollars to Raul Rivero, director of Cuba Press, so that said sum could be distributed among the journalists of this agency". (26)

In July 2002 RWB sent 1650 dollars to Ricardo Gonzalez, "a Reporters Without Borders correspondent." On 19 December 2002 *Revista Cuba*, the magazine of the "independent journalists", was launched at the home of James Cason. On 27 February 2003, Ricardo Gonzalez wrote a letter to Robert Menard, in which he discussed the payments that RWB were making to the "independent journalists" and the literature they were producing and distributing. Manuel attended a meeting at the U.S. Interests Section:

"Jeffrey de Laurentis asked about repression of 'dissidents', while Louis Nigro said he had visited a number of 'independent libraries' in Camaguey, and noted a shortage of literature. At the end of the meeting, all of the participants were given small Tecsun brand radios as gifts. I met James Cason at the home of Gonzalo Gallegos. We met in the 'library'. The main reason behind the meeting was to introduce us to the principal 'dissident' leaders. The people there asked for money – 'support' - and once again we heard about the 'independent libraries', and the press related projects." (27)

Pedro Luis Veliz Martinez and Ana Rosa Jorna Calixto became Agents Ernesto and Gabriela in 1996. They made contact with Leopoldo Fernandez Pujals who founded the Elena Mederos Foundation, a "humanitarian" organisation. He has provided funds to Reporters Without Borders as a means of supporting "independent journalists". Pedro and Ana also worked with Ricardo Bofill who created the Cuban Committee for Human Rights. The French journalists Renaud Delourme and Dominique Louis Nasplezes contacted Bofill on the instructions of Armando Valladeres (author of *Against All Hope*), to carry out international defamations of Cuba.

Pedro and Ana were given instructions to create an "independent library". The instructions came through three different channels almost simultaneously: the U.S. Interests Section, the Miami Medical Team Foundation and Cuban Democratic Action.

Conclusion

The research which I carried out in Cuban libraries in October 2005 was designed to test the allegation made by Robert Kent and "The Friends of Cuban Libraries" that George Orwell and other authors are banned in Cuba. My investigations have revealed that this is not the case and there are no banned authors in Cuba. In this chapter I have examined the presence of some other English language authors in Cuban libraries and, vice versa, the presence of

some well known Cuban authors in British libraries. I have also considered the development and current condition of the Cuban state run library service and the network of bookshops selling books at affordable prices. Finally, I have examined in some detail the so-called "independent" libraries and I have established that they are totally dependent on the U.S. Interests Section in Havana for their funding, support and direction. I have also considered the roles played by Robert Kent, the "Friends of Cuban Libraries", Robert Menard and Reporters Without Borders.

"Four Legs Good, Two Legs Bad" was the mantra first adopted by the newly liberated inhabitants of *Animal Farm*. Robert Kent has adopted a similar mantra for Cuba – "Independent Libraries Good, State Libraries Bad." This is a classic piece of *Nineteen Eighty Four* 'Newspeak' like 'War is Peace' and 'Slavery is Freedom'. In reality Cuba's "independent libraries" are mercenaries in the pay of the U.S. government and not dissidents in the true meaning of the word. According to the dictionary a dissident is "one who disagrees or dissents". To dissent is "to refuse to conform to a common doctrine, belief or conduct." This leads Felipe Perez Roque to the conviction that:

"We are the real dissidents. It is the people of Cuba who have dared to dissent from the commonly shared doctrine that this country should be a colony of the United States, that this country could not be an independent nation, that there was a manifest destiny that obliged a small country, located right next to a major power, to desist from the 'insane' aspiration of its founding fathers to be neither a colony of Spain nor a part of the United States.

We are the ones who dissent from the current world order. In the past, we disagreed with and helped to fight colonialism, and apartheid; today, we disagree with neo-liberalism, and the promotion of market forces and savage capitalism as the means of ensuring the development and the rights of the world's peoples. Therefore we, the Cuban people, are the dissidents. We are the ones who refuse to conform with the uniform model of those who seek to impose a single system on the world, a single way of living, a single model of conduct."
(28)

Unlike Wormwold, the reluctant spy in Graham Greene's *Our Man in Havana*, Robert Kent (aka Robert Emmet) is a very eager spy for the US government and it's Interests Section in Havana. I started this chapter with the opening paragraph from *Animal Farm* and I end it with the final paragraph from this classic novel. In the same way that the animals looked from pig to man and back again and could not tell the difference, so if we look from Robert Kent the librarian to Robert Emmet the spy it is impossible to spot the difference:

"Twelve voices were shouting in anger, and they were all alike. No question, now, what had happened to the faces of the pigs. The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again: but already it was impossible to say which was which".

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(1) The idea for the title of this chapter (suggested to me by Harriet Karsh) came from *Reading Lolita in Tehran* by Azar Nafisi (2004). Set in Iran in the late 90's, this is the story of Azar Nafisi and seven young women – her former students – who gathered at her house every Thursday to discuss forbidden works of Western literature :

"If I were to choose a work of fiction that would most resonate with our lives in the Islamic Republic of Iran, it would not be 'The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie' or even '1984' but perhaps Nabakov's 'Invitation to a Beheading' or better yet, 'Lolita'. This, then, is the story of 'Lolita' in Tehran, how 'Lolita' gave a different colour to Tehran and how Tehran helped redefine Nabakov's novel, turning it into this 'Lolita', our 'Lolita'."

I carried out the research for this chapter during a visit to Havana from 26 October – 1 November 2005. I visited the National Library, two public libraries, three academic / research libraries, and over a dozen bookshops. I also went to the open air book market at Plaza de Armas in Old Havana. And it was here, on one of the many second hand book stalls that surround this beautiful public square, that I saw a copy of Nabokov's *Lolita*.

(2) George Orwell (1945) *Animal Farm*

(3) G. Cabrera Infante (1994*) Mea Cuba*

(4) Isaac Saney (2004) *Cuba – A Revolution in Motion*

(5) - (6) Robert Kent (5 August 2005) *Open Letter to the International Library Community*

(7) Joseph Mutti (2005) Gay and Lesbian Cuba in *Havana and the Best of Cuba*

(8) Reinaldo Arenas (1993) *Before Night Falls*

(9) Ian Lumsden (1996) *Machos, Maricones and Gays: Cuba and Homosexuality*

(10) Rhonda L. Neugebauer, (2002) *"Payment for Services Rendered": US-funded Dissent and the "Independent Libraries Project" in Cuba*

(11) Silvia Martinez Puentes (2004) *Cuba beyond our dreams*

(12) – (28) Rosa Miriam Elizalde and Luis Baez (2003) *The Dissidents*

Library Services for Newcomers to Canada: Embracing Cultural Diversity

Kendra Bender (MLIS student, School of Library & Information Studies, University of Alberta, CANADA)

Excerpt from the Canadian Library Association 2007 Students Article Contest Press Release states: "The second runner-up is Kendra Bender for "Library Services for Newcomers to Canada: Embracing Cultural Diversity". Kendra is a student in the MLIS program at the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Alberta. Comments on this entry were that it incorporates both personal experience and a professional research approach, it was well-written, timely and focuses on Canada. Kendra will also receive a cash prize courtesy of the Wosk Family and a choice of CLA publications." Full press release here: http://www.cla.ca/awards/student2007.html

Prior to my LIS education, I worked at a drop-in centre for immigrants in Saskatoon. On a daily basis, I was approached with questions: *Where can I find information about employment? How do I get a driver's license? Where can I find resources to help me learn English?* The information needs of newcomers to Canada are vast. Through my work experience, I gained an understanding of how extraordinarily difficult it is for immigrants to make sense of the language, customs, and political infrastructure in a new country.

Immigration to Canada by individuals whose first language is not English is steadily on the rise. Many immigrants come to Canada to find meaningful, well-paid employment and the opportunity to have more freedom for themselves and their families.[1] Today, more than 10% of the over 32 million Canadians speak a language other than English or French in their homes, and approximately 20% of the population is foreign-born.[2] However, despite the growing number of immigrants to Canada, average expenditures for multilingual materials in Canadian libraries are less than 2%.[3]

It takes time for emerging immigrant communities to "get organized, have a presence and make their needs known to public institutions", but libraries can identify and communicate with these populations through immigrant advocacy organizations.[4] The agency that I worked for, for example, often provides a link between newcomers and the public library. Library tours are incorporated into programming and librarians are invited to the drop-in centre to speak about information services and local history.

Surrey Public Library, which serves a community of 56 ethnic groups, anticipated a growth of ethnic communities nearly 20 years ago.[5] They created a "vision of the Library as an inclusive and vibrant reflection of the community" by forming working relationships with local multicultural agencies and leaders from ethnic groups, hiring individuals with a variety of language skills, and conducting cross-

cultural workshops for all staff.[6] These actions reflect CLA's Library Services to Linguistic and Ethnic Minorities position statement, which recognizes that libraries have a unique and necessary role to promote "cross-cultural understanding in the interest of a harmonious and integrated society".[7] This statement also advocates that libraries should "reflect the multicultural nature of Canadian society as is appropriate to the collections and services provided for their client groups".[8]

One of the most ethnically diverse cities in Canada is Richmond, B.C. with an immigrant population of about 54%.[9] To develop services to meet the needs of this growing multicultural community, Richmond Public Library (RPL) established a Multilingual Services Department in 2000.[10] RPL strongly supports the notion of community partnerships, which help to promote library services and allow for resource-sharing in the offering of programs.[11] Many multilingual programs and services were introduced at RPL including a new immigrant orientation program, an employment trends series, and ESL conversation circles.[12] Similarly, Edmonton Public Library (EPL) recently posted a Multicultural Community Development Intern position designed to help meet the needs of significant immigrant populations, and to increase the awareness and use of the library's collection among these communities.[13]

For immigrants whose first language is not English, the ability to understand services offered in libraries and to express themselves in either of the official languages varies from person to person.[14] Some people may not be familiar with library terminology, or know how to ask appropriate questions of library staff.[15] However, these individuals share the same right to access information with others whose language skills are more proficient.[16] The CLA Library Services to Linguistic and Ethnic Minorities position statement mirrors this sentiment: "all citizens of Canada should have equitable access to library materials and services which will meet their needs regardless of their language [or] cultural background".[17] Outside of Canada, equal access to information by immigrants has recently been strongly reinforced by a resolution passed at the American Library Association (ALA) mid-winter meeting in Seattle. The resolution boldly states that the U.S. library community "opposes all attempts at the local, state and federal level to restrict access to information by immigrants" and "supports the protection of each person's civil liberties, regardless of that individual's nationality, residency, or status".[18]

At the public library in Saskatoon, I would often encounter the newcomers I had met through my job. Many would be with their children; others would be using the public computers. I would see the same individuals on numerous occasions, so I sensed that visits to the library were part of their routine. In 2001, 30% of non-native Canadians used the Toronto Public Library (TPL) weekly, which was more than double the rate of library use by native-born Canadians.[19] The same year, TPL's multilingual circulation increased by 28%, reaching 12% of total circulation.[20] 34 of the 40 languages collected at TPL were spoken by staff with collection responsibilities and library pages were recognized as one of their "great untapped resources" to compensate for some of the remaining language gaps.[21] However, collection development can be challenging for multicultural communities, as newcomers may move many times within Canada before they settle.[22]

To help public libraries improve collections and services for Russian immigrants in Toronto, Dali (2004) conducted a study of the reading habits of this population. Unfortunately, the majority of respondents sampled in her survey were not satisfied with the collection of Russian-language books in their public libraries. However, the public library was characterized as a "place to spend time", where English language materials about the history and customs of their new country could be accessed for free.[23] Accessing materials for free was a theme that reoccurred in Dali's research. Improved income did not seem to reduce the respondents' inclination to use the public library for acquiring desired Russian-language titles (if available), precisely because they were offered at no cost.[24]

To develop multilingual collections, librarians need "professional curiosity, an ambition to build [a multilingual] collection best suited to the users and knowledge of the language for which one is developing a collection".[25] Libraries must know the community for whom the collection is being developed and listen to its members, recognizing that immigrant communities may be "well informed about the latest titles, authors and popular trends in…contemporary literature".[26]

Although recent library research related to immigrants in Canada seems to be limited, several themes are evident: public libraries are being called to recognize the realities of multiculturalism, provide cross-cultural training for existing librarians and support staff, employ a diverse workforce, and develop partnerships with immigrant and ethnic organizations for resource-sharing and understanding. Many immigrants suffer from information poverty by not having ready access to historical or contemporary materials in their first languages, or by not possessing the ability to fully understand the many English-language materials offered by public libraries. Nonetheless, it is clear that many immigrants are using the public library frequently to support their adjustment to life in Canada. In response, the library community must continue to embrace cultural diversity and strive to equitably meet the needs of multi-ethnic populations.

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[11] Jang et al., 26; Jang, 158-159.
[12] Jang, 159.

[13] Edmonton Public Library, "Job Posting," Edmonton Public Library, http://www.epl.ca/EPLJobPostingNo.cfm?id=IO-01-07 (accessed March 29, 2007).

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[16] Ibid., 111.

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